commonweal

The Editors
REMEMBERING
THE GOOD EARTH

ONE DOLLAR

JUNE 19, 1981

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What to think about . . .

Sex in Sweden, Strife in Northern Ireland, Italy & abortion, France & the left, Yugoslavia & the church

Also: **Garvey on abortion orthodoxies, Powers on yesterday's talismans, Sally Fitzgerald on Mary Gordon** ***Women***

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Correspondence

Healthy self-love

Buffalo, N.Y.

To the Editors: I am somewhat uncomfortable with John Garvey's recent article [Apr. 24] in which he seems to downgrade the concept of learning to love yourself as somehow not appropriate or relevant in the stark, terrible times in which we live.

He quotes, "He who seeks his life will lose it" as an indication from God's Word that we shouldn't be focusing on ourselves. However, Jesus's greatest commandment is framed in the words, "Love thy neighbor *as thyself*."

I do not feel it is a trivial, self-indulgent pastime to strive toward total self-acceptance and healthy self-love. It is, in fact, crucial to our mental and spiritual health and to our ability to love others that we have as little self-hatred within ourselves as possible.

Countless people have had a great deal of guilt laid upon them by the church and/or by parents and are rendered virtually incapable of ministering to others because of personalities crippled by fear and self-dislike. To say that they should ignore this soul sickness and go out and minister to others is equivalent to saying that one shouldn't concern oneself with a serious physical illness because that would be selfish.

The words, "Know thyself," are a distillation of all the wisdom of all the philosophers of all ages. It is not a selfish quest. It is an imperative.

DOROTHY J. LEWIS

The Catholic landowner

St. Louis, Mo.

To the Editors: Sean Cronin, in "Portraits from El Salvador" [May 8], vividly described four types of individuals involved in the socially complicated society of El Salvador, and most likely in other Latin American countries as well: the businessman and small coffee plantation-owner, the Catholic missionary, the president of the junta, and the exiled newspaper publisher. But there was one portrait missing, which I wish he could have provided. Where, in all the words which have been written about El Salvador, is a picture of the rich Catholic landowner?

We know very little about this elusive figure except that his and a few other families for a long time have owned most of the productive land of the country. Occasionally we get glimpses of his walled villa in a lush suburb of San Salvador, but does he still live there, or has he departed for a safer place? Almost certainly he was educated in private Catholic schools, as his children are, as his wife was (she may, in fact, have been a boarder in the same American Sacred Heart academy I attended).

That much I can guess about him: from here on I lose him. Does this man attend Mass, participating in the sacraments with a clear conscience? What has his Catholic education taught him about social justice? When his church speaks out on this subject, does he turn a deaf ear? If asked, would he respond that he *has* acted justly by relinquishing many acres of his land, for which he has not yet been reimbursed, to the "campesinos"—peasants who aren't Catholics, but "marxists," and therefore expendable.

We are told that the political situation is now so far beyond his control that this Catholic landowner is too frightened to come forward. But why, while he still possessed the power to do so, did he not respond to the needs of his country? If he could, would he now use his influence over the military to end the killing and to move the government of his country toward efficient implementation of social reform? To be fair to this man, he should be invited to step out of his shadow so that his side of the El Salvadoran story can be heard. ANNE MORRIS

Handguns & crime rates

New Smyrna Beach, Fla.

To the Editors: I write in response to your editorial on gun control in the Apr. 10 issue. This is one of the few times I find myself in disagreement with *Commonweal*. The weakness of the current gun control proposals are that they stand on a foundation of two shaky assumptions. The first is that the proposed laws will in fact keep guns out of the hands of the people who would misuse them. The second is that having kept guns out of the hands of people who would misuse them, those people will not perpetuate the same crime with another weapon to any significant degree. Nothing now or in history supports those assumptions.

When it is pointed out that many states and cities have very tough gun laws indeed, and that they have higher murder rates than many states with minimal gun laws, pro-gun-law people respond by saying it is because guns can be brought in from states with weak laws, and the solution is to enact a federal law. This begs the question of why some states with weak laws have a lower murder rate. In those states guns can be bought easily right there *and* guns can be brought in.

When state laws don't work the argument is for federal law; when guns are brought in from the Bahamas and Cuba, Poland and other countries, what then is the proposal? And of course that is what happens. It happened with federal law banning liquor, it is happening with drugs, and to some extent it is happening with guns now.

I had occasion to run a survey in the 1960s to find the relationship, if any, between gun laws and murder. There wasn't any. What did emerge with startling clarity was the increase in murder as one went from the North to the South in the U.S. except for the large cities. It was further clear that the consistent factor was different races living together. Wyoming, Washington, Montana, and

(Continued on page 382)

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REMEMBERING THE GOOD EARTH

"There is a spiritual corollary to the way we are currently deforesting and denaturing our planet. In the end what we must most defoliate and deprive is ourselves. We might as soon start collecting up the world's poetry, every line and every copy, to burn it in a final pyre – and think we should lead richer and happier lives thereafter."

—John Fowles

YOU THOUGHT MAYBE we'd forgotten. Well, we haven't — that this year marks the one hundredth anniversary of Teilhard de Chardin's birth and the eight hundredth anniversary of St. Francis of Assisi's. Better to remember these two kindred lovers of earth in one breath — and as many of our city-dwelling readers plan flights from the "outer space" of an almost wholly man-made setting back to a habitat closer to nature's restorative powers. We just want to put you on environmental watch.

No, we haven't forgotten the twelfth century herald singing to Brother Sun and Sister Moon — or Brother Ass; much less his twentieth century counterpart who with pentecostal fire transposed to an evolutionary key Francis's hymn to the universe. Nor have we forgotten how warmly welcome, after the chill wind of so much neo-scholastic dualism and rationalism, was Teilhard's earthy mysticism. Indeed the man tapped in Catholic souls a long hidden vein of gold untouched since Scotus Erigena and the great mystical naturalism of the twelfth-century renaissance. And arguably he reminded Americans of all persuasions of a once vital piety toward nature now bleared and smeared by trade — the voice of Jonathan Edwards, Emerson, Thoreau, and the Hudson River school of painters.

There is perhaps no better way to remember and honor the voices of these two men than reflection on, and action in behalf of, that nature which fuels, supplies, and feeds us. One of the side-effects of the national concern with lagging economic growth, productivity, and reindustrialization has been a growing tendency to dismiss the environmental movement. If that movement ever enjoyed a grace period in which its claims were accepted without close examination, the pendulum has now swung in the other direction. It is not so much that disturbing questions about water resources, strip mining, acid rain, toxic chemicals, nuclear power, etc., etc., have been resolved as that too many opinion makers would simply prefer to look the other way. And a few negative generalizations about environmentalists are a great aid in this new exercise in benign neglect. To paraphrase Mary Poppins, a spoonful of caricature helps the pollution go down.

The caricatures, of course, are not without some basis in fact. Environmentalism has frequently had a distressingly elitist side, displaying a somewhat aristocratic indifference to the economic pressures and the cultural attitudes that shape the

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existence of most people. It has sounded the alarm again and again — and in not every case has the alarm been justified. And some of the population activists, in particular, have proven themselves to be all-too-faithful heirs of Malthus and the Social Darwinians.

But by no means have all environmentalists and ecologists been doomsayers. And it is even difficult to imagine that we would be better off without some of the movement's exaggerations. In the debate, for instance, between the Club of Rome and its critics, even the Club of Rome, it seemed, had to admit much of the critics' case. But would the critics have raised the whole issue of environmental limits in the first place? Without these sometimes strident voices, or the softer voice of a Rachel Carson, we would have proceeded along our anthropocentric way to degrade the earth — obliviously. No less than the abolitionists who spoke for voiceless slaves, or those who protested child labor, ecologists and environmentalists have spoken for silent nature. And none too soon. For where will the rights of individuals and the free market be if tropical deforestation and chemical pollution heat up our latitude a few degrees by next century or disturb the ozone layer protecting us from the sun's killing ultraviolet rays? Or where will we be if we poison ground water in the great plains, or erode that one foot of precious topsoil there and elsewhere that is all that stands between us and the barrenness of the moon? The answer is nowhere.

Environmentalism has been accused of being a new religion, one with a fundamentalist's lack of concern for the complexity of the issues it addresses. This journal is too aware of the potential excesses of religious fervor and of the uses of a healthy skepticism not to have some sympathy for that accusation. We understand the irreverent impatience with a stuffed-up piety that may lead one to paste on a bumper sticker saying, "Nuke the whales!" But when all is said and done, the religious factor is indeed basic. Complex issues will never be settled by reams of "facts." Data will always be evaluated in light of a preexisting attitude, and the environmentalists are right in demanding that this attitude be one of reverence and stewardship. If this is religious, so be it.

No, nature is not just one more competing interest among others in the political race for attention. To cultivate her well-being is to preserve *the fundamental condition* without which neither individual autonomy nor the market could exist. Our laws, tilted to favor individual property rights since the Republic's foundation, are finally beginning to recognize the priority of nature's claim — and that we can't always wait, given the state-of-the-art, for science to establish with certitude the long-term harmful effects of industry. Somehow, Hooker Chemical's claim that at the time of the original dumping in Love Canal there was no scientific evidence there would be any substantial damaging effect is little consolation — or excuse. Similarly, the current massive destruction of tropical forests in Brazil, Indonesia, and central Africa — with the projected loss of twenty percent of the world's plant and animal species by the turn of the century — may be a tolerable risk. It also may not be. According to some scenarios, it could result in climatic changes that would reduce the U.S.-Canadian "breadbasket" to the status of near-desert — and what the extinction of so much of the earth's genetic pool would mean for medical and other kinds of scientific research is anyone's ominous guess.

Is all this hamburger worth it? Or all these single-family homes with their warm tropical wood floors, cabinets, and walling? Or the deluge of paper? For it's market demands like these — and so many others of a consumer society — which may well be turning people's short-term economic interests into a long-term ecological disaster. Over-intensive erosive farming is drinking up and poisoning ground water at an alarming rate even here in the U.S. Abroad, cropland is being diverted from domestic food production; and worldwide, we are allowing the "desertification" of cropland, forests, and grassland — at a rate the size of half the state of California each year. None of these trends, with regional and international cooperation, are irreversible. At the moment, there's time to take thought of the morrow — and our Teilhardian responsibility for bearing the course of evolution.

R.I.P.

"No one can put a style on me," she said. "I've learned from many people. I change all the time. I experiment to keep up with what is going on, to hear what everybody else is doing. I even keep a little ahead of them, like a mirror that shows what will happen next."

Mary Lou Williams, one of the greatest jazz musicians of all time, died the night of May 28th in Durham, North Carolina. While playing in a Paris nightclub one night back in 1954, she'd got up, and walked away from the music world for three years. "I got the sign that everybody should pray every day. I had never felt a conscious desire to get close to God. But it seemed that night that it all came to a head." After her conversion to Catholicism in 1957, she made a comeback, and in 1975 brought her third "jazz Mass" to St. Patrick's cathedral in New York. Said her fellow pianist, Billy Taylor, "she's one of the very few people I know who can do this—consistently swing in any context."

EDITORIAL POSTSCRIPT

In our May 22 issue, an editorial called "A GOP Future?", citing various statistical measurements, noted that voters in the United States are becoming increasingly Republican in sentiment. The Democrats, we said, would therefore be making a mistake to be overly optimistic about their prospects in 1982. Now comes another confirmation of this thesis, this time from the latest Associated Press/NBC News poll.

In a historic reversal of opinion, more Americans told the AP/NBC pollsters that they will vote for Republican candidates for the House of Representatives next time than for their Democratic opponents, with forty-three percent of those questioned saying they would vote for the Republican candidate,

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thirty-five percent for the Democrat, and twenty-two percent not sure. This is the first time in almost thirty years that the Republicans emerged as winners on this question. In 1980, for example, forty-eight percent opted for the Democrats and thirty-four percent for the Republicans. Similarly, on another question the number of those formally calling themselves Republicans has increased six points since the opening of 1980, still another indicator of the changing climate of political opinion in this country.

All is not lost for the Democrats, of course. The congressional elections are eighteen months away, twenty-two percent of the voters are still undecided, and a lot can change by 1982. But the poll figures are another illustration of the problem in strategy the Democrats now face. And so far, the party's leadership has responded in an uninspired fashion. The problem as they see it is the Republican edge in party organization, fund-raising, and the whole panoply of recently developed political "technologies." The Democratic leaders are right in recognizing that these are areas where their party needs to do some catching up. But the problem, in fact, goes deeper. People no longer know what the Democrats stand for. One pollster and campaign advisor to Democrats, for instance, described his own predicament in mapping candidates' strategies: "Out of the record of the last two or four years, there was no clear Democratic message, no articulated Democratic vision of the future." Surely that is part of the meaning encapsulated in catchphrases about the end of the New Deal or the exhaustion of liberalism. In this situation, Democrats ought to be debating issues as well as studying techniques.

Unfortunately that is less likely to occur now that the Democratic National Committee has agreed to the proposal of its new chairman, Charles Manatt. Mr. Manatt convinced the DNC to reduce the number of delegates to the 1982 midterm convention and to keep the selection of these delegates largely within the hands of party officials. This decision runs directly counter to the mandate of the last Democratic national convention, which voted for two-thirds of the mid-term convention delegates to be chosen by party rank-and-file in elections in each congressional district. It also seems to run counter to Mr. Manatt's earlier declaration, "We must organize this party from the grassroots up — not from the top down." At the least, the Democratic party should stand for democracy.

But the drift of the DNC's decision is clear: to keep the party's attention on technical issues rather than substantive ones. Jimmy Carter, of course, tried this all-things-to-all-people approach. After his four years in office, more voters considered him a "conservative" than had in 1976 — but the greatest number were just plain confused about what he was. His strategy worked well enough to make him the biggest loser of any incumbent president since Hoover.

The Democratic leadership ought to be warned. With Mr. Reagan still extremely popular, the easy thing for the Democrats to do right now is to go along with him on his budget cuts in social spending, his huge increases in military spending, and the income tax plan so many economists think will be highly inflationary. But if they follow this course and the Reagan formula works despite expert expectations, it will be Mr. Reagan and not the Democrats who will get the credit. And if the Reagan program ends in disaster after the Democrats have gone along with it, what issue will they be able to take to the people? Indeed, in the latter case why would they merit support?

Report from Italy

ABORTION 1, POPE 0

A CRUSADE THAT FAILED

FOUR DAYS after narrowly escaping death in St. Peter's Square, Pope John Paul II faced another and, as it turns out far more serious challenge—not to his life but to what he stands for. On May 17 and 18 the Italian electorate, 97.5 percent Catholic on the books, roundly defeated a church-sponsored referendum that in effect would have rolled back Italy's three-year-old abortion law. The pope had staked a lot on this vote. Over the last year he conducted a personal and politically controversial campaign in favor of the anti-abortion proposal which in fact he himself had initiated. The enormity of the defeat at the polls—68 percent to 32 percent—raises questions about the nature of Catholicism in this most Catholic of countries and, perhaps more importantly, about the pope's approach to the delicate relation of church and state in Italy.

The Italian abortion statute, which went into effect in May of 1978, sets four conditions for legal abortion in the first trimester: serious damage to the physical or mental health of the woman; disfavorable economic, social, or family conditions; conception by rape or incest; and sickness or malformation of the fetus. The woman herself decides whether the conditions for terminating a pregnancy apply in her case. (Minors must have either parental permission or the approval of a judge.) A woman who wants an abortion during this period must state her reasons to a private or public physician. The doctor presents her with a certificate which, after seven days of reflection, she takes to a public hospital or authorized private clinic in order to have the abortion. After the first trimester, abortions can be obtained only if the pregnancy or birth would result in grave danger for the woman or if illness or malformation of the fetus would threaten her mental or physical health.

In fact the law has not functioned well. Italian statistics claim that 80 percent of abortions among minors continue to be carried out illegally, and the World Health Organization reports that out of 800,000 abortions performed each year in Italy, 600,000 are still done by back-room abortionists. One reason for this state of affairs is that 72 percent of Italy's

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thirty-three hundred obstetricians and gynecologists have, in accordance with a provision in the law, declared their conscientious objection to performing abortions.

Pope Wojtyla, as he is popularly called in Italy, went into action against the abortion law within two months of his election. He strongly urged conscientious objection on the part of doctors, and early in 1979 he floated the idea of collecting signatures for an anti-abortion referendum. His suggestion met with a lukewarm reception among many Italian bishops, who, fearing a defeat at the polls, did not want to risk splitting Italian Catholics on the issue. Apparently the bishops were also better attuned than Wojtyla to the intricacies of conducting such a campaign in a country that has a subtly balanced concordat with the Vatican. The Vatican's usual way to indirectly influence Italian politics is through the members of the Christian Democratic party, but their embarrassing defeat over the anti-divorce referendum in 1974, when they faithfully fought for the church's position, had cooled their enthusiasm for another moral crusade.

Faced with such hesitations, Pope Wojtyla decided to take a more direct and personal approach to repealing the abortion law. He made the serious and controversial decision to bypass the Christian Democratic party and take his case directly to Italian Catholics through such organizations as the Pro-Life Movement, Communion and Freedom, and the Focolarini. However, given the lackluster support of the bishops, a first effort at collecting the required five hundred thousand signatures for a referendum failed miserably in April, 1980. After upbraiding the Italian Episcopal Conference and whipping it into line, the pontiff chose to take the stump himself. In the late

ON CHOOSING FRIENDS

SO WHO NEEDS ENEMIES?

THE POLITICAL CULTURES of Mediterranean countries place a premium on personal relationships with those in power elsewhere. For this reason, early this year Italian politicians were standing in line to make the acquaintance of the American secretary of state. Fortunately for Secretary Haig, the Republican party had a representative in Rome, Mr. Robert Cunningham, to help screen those seeking contacts with the new administration in Washington.

Interviewed by the weekly *L'Espresso*, Mr. Cunningham indicated that the Reagan administration planned to "take a tough stance with respect to its adversaries [in Italy] and be completely open to its friends." It seems that the friends included, along with various Christian Democrats, Social Democrats, and others, one Giorgio Almirante. "Perhaps he is in the wrong party, but I think he is a loyal person," said Mr. Cunningham.

Giorgio Almirante is a Fascist. He is the leader of the Italian Social Movement (*Movimento Sociale Italiano*—MSI), an overtly neo-fascist political party he helped found in 1946. Before 1943, Almirante was a journalist, writing for a Fascist-sponsored, anti-Semitic periodical. Between 1943 and the end of the war, he was an official of Mussolini's Salò Republic. More recently, in 1973, an overwhelming majority of the Italian Chamber of Deputies voted to remove Almirante's parliamentary immunity, making him subject to prosecution for "reconstitution of the Fascist party."

Admittedly, Almirante is not the most radical member of his party. Among the MSI deputies is Pino Rauti, outspokenly committed to the use of political terrorism. The Italian Social Movement has long nurtured substantial para-military organizations and a youthful activist wing whose acts of violence have claimed not a few lives. As party leader, Almirante has shown little inclination to curb the radical element.

Almirante and the MSI cannot be separated. The Italian public will view U.S. expressions of sympathy with Almirante as expressions of sympathy with neo-fascism. This elicits objections of both a pragmatic and an ethical nature.

United States foreign policy would derive no substantive benefit from even only an implied relationship with the MSI. The party is small, with less than five percent of the seats in the legislature. It is significant, given American commercial interests in Italy, that MSI support within the business community is proportionately no greater. The party is the object of intense opprobrium on the part of most Italians. In 1960, popular demonstrations toppled a Christian Democratic government that relied on neo-fascist support in the Chamber of Deputies. Prevailing attitudes on such matters have changed little.

Those of us who find the ethical precepts of Fascism abhorrent have little need for the preceding argument. The MSI is among those who, in the words of noted writer Alberto Moravia, "want a strong state, not a just state." But perhaps Mr. Cunningham's complacency toward the Fascist heritage and present outlook of Almirante's MSI only reflects the Reagan administration's belief in the power of the neat distinction between "authoritarian" forces and "totalitarian" ones. Others, more impressed with history and less impressed with diplomatically convenient labels, will recall that it was precisely Mussolini's Fascism that proudly launched the deadly modern concept of the "total state."

ERIC R. TERZUOLO

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summer he gave a series of rousing speeches against abortion during his visits to Italian towns. By the end of September, 1980, more than enough signatures were gathered for a proposal that would allow legal abortions only if the woman's physical health were endangered. (Even such therapeutic abortions are against Catholic teaching, but this was the best the church could do. The abrogation of therapeutic abortion was declared unconstitutional by the Italian courts.)

The pope's "crusade" (he called it a *causa santa*) aroused bitter reactions among leaders of the secular parties of the Italian government, who widely accused the pope of violating both the spirit and the letter of the 1929 Concordat. (Only the Christian Democrats and the neo-fascist Italian Social Movement came out in favor of the Catholic referendum.) The Concordat expressly forbids clergymen to interfere in the life of the state while carrying out their ministry, but the Vatican defended the pontiff's speeches as an exercise of his duties to teach the principles of Catholic morality and natural law.

Harder to defend under Italian law were the statements made by Cardinals Ugo Poletti of Rome and Giuseppe Siri of Genoa, presumably with the approval of the pope. On the Sunday before the referendum Siri obliged his priests to read a letter at all Masses, in which he declared that "since abortion is contrary to the law of the Lord, a Christian is bound in conscience to vote "yes" for the Catholic proposal. Poletti issued a letter saying that Catholics were obliged "to vote 'yes' for the abolition of the articles of death contained in the abortion law." Both statements would seem to violate Article 98 of the Italian election law, which requires priests "to abstain from any action that would bind the conscience of voters to cast their ballot one way rather than another." Some Pro-Life supporters retorted that many who criticized these statements had also berated Pope Pius XII for not speaking out more clearly against the Holocaust. Others demonstrated against what they called the Slaughter of the Innocents and "The Year of Herod." The church's campaign, in short, generated a lot of heat. More importantly, it failed.

What does this vote say about Pope John Paul's approach to church-state relations in Catholic Italy? In a sense the referendum does mark his first and somewhat personal setback, one that is due both to his activist style and to his misperceptions of Italy. The misperceptions may have a lot to do with the fact that he surrounds himself with advisers who come from a very different cultural situation—his native Poland—and who encourage the pope's tendency to see Italy, and maybe the world, through that optic. The Italian bishops, who are not famous for their intellectual accomplishments, are not stupid either. They knew they were up against stiff opposition from a country in which eight out of ten Catholics do not actively practice their faith and which by and large, as the president of the Italian Episcopal Conference, Cardinal Anastasio Ballestrero, has admitted, is Catholic in name only. Perhaps the bishops were right after all when they dragged their heels at the beginning of the pontiff's campaign. But if you combine this pope's strong conservative convictions with his activist approach, and add for good measure his ignorance of or carelessness about the intricacies of Italian politics, then he was in for a bad fall sooner or later.

Italians are, to be sure, a talkative people, but when it comes to politics and moral affairs, much more happens here by going unsaid, or at most by being indirectly said, than gets done by vociferous crusades. Italians are masters of the hint, the raised eyebrow, the allusion. They virtually invented the art of diplomacy, and for them it is very much a matter of *arrangiarsi*, accommodation or making do, and above all of sensitivity to complexity, pragmatism, and the difficulties of change. With Luther, you may argue that Christianity does not sit well with such a cultivation of ambiguity, and indeed maybe it doesn't. (The pattern may have been set from the beginning: Pontius Pilate, Roman to the core, *did* try to get Jesus off, but neither Jesus nor his accusers were up for Italian forms of accommodation.) But then the issue, along with questions of moral right and wrong, becomes one of prudence, the virtue of knowing and choosing the right means to achieve the proper end.

By misjudging the Italian situation to begin with, and by taking the arguably misguided decision to bypass the normal political channels, Pope Wojtyla seems to have lost what he wanted to gain. As sociologist Franco Ferrarotti has pointed out, the Italians, whether rightly or wrongly, saw the existing abortion law as a *pragmatic* matter of exercising some measure of public control over what had become a run-away underground market of highly paid butchers. During the referendum campaign, as far as I could see, there was no folkloric celebration of abortion on the part of those who defended the present law. (In fact, the Radical party's referendum proposal, which would have liberalized the law further, was defeated by an even greater margin than the Catholic proposal.) On the contrary, Italians who opposed the church's referendum spoke universally of abortion as a tragedy, but one which would become worse without the existing law. Pope John Paul, however, encouraged the notion of a crusade, of a holy war between two stark alternatives with no in-between: good *vs.* evil, life *vs.* murder, Christ *vs.* the powers of darkness. Again, wisdom may lie more with the conciliatory approach taken by the Italian bishops after the defeat at the polls: no condemnations or quasi-excommunications as after the ill-fated anti-divorce referendum of 1974; rather a somber appeal to Catholics to examine their consciences.

The referendum does mark the emergence of a "new" Italy, which in fact had been developing for at least two decades: more secularist, more sensitive to women's issues, less willing to follow the ideology of their political parties or their church. Even the usually conservative south of Italy, contrary to all expectations, voted strongly against the anti-abortion proposal. Whether the defeat of the referendum be applauded or bemoaned, the vote had the positive effect of registering where the new Italy stands. The future of the church here may depend on whether and how the Italian bishops, and Pope John Paul II, appropriate that fact.

THOMAS SHEEHAN

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Of several minds: *John Garvey*

BEYOND PROOF & DISPROOF

THE RELIGIONS OF PRO-CHOICE & PRO-LIFE

MOST OF US are tired of the issue of abortion. Just about everything wrong with both sides of the issue has been discussed by now, including the inconsistencies that mark both sides—for example, there are hawkish, pro-death penalty right-to-lifers and there are pro-choice people who care more about the survival of the harp seal than about unborn human beings.

There are exceptions on both sides: Magda Denes and Linda Bird Francke have both written books which deal with the difficulty of abortion from a pro-choice perspective. Although I disagree with many of their conclusions, I can find common ground with people who see that the issue has tragic dimensions, and involves decisions about life, and the taking of life. There are pro-life people who see the connection between abortion, the patterns of social oppression that make abortion seem desirable, and the anti-human direction of the arms race.

Between the reasonable parties on both sides (and there are not many of them) the discussion is much like the debate over the just war theory: some believe that war, tragic as it is, is justifiable under certain circumstances; others believe that the justification of war is itself one of war's causes. Both at least agree that war is a tragic thing. To dismiss the element of tragedy involved in any decision to take any life (as many defenders of abortion do) or to dismiss the inconsistencies which are involved in the argument that pre-natal life is sacred, but the life of a criminal or an enemy is not, is to avoid the real point at issue. Unfortunately this routine dismissal is characteristic of both sides, with *Mother Jones* and *The Pro-Life Defender* equally cheap and shallow.

But despite our weariness, despite the degenerating argument, the issue won't go away. It is about something too important, and the significance of the issue extends beyond the specific problem of abortion.

Pluralism has hit a real obstacle here. Law has confused the issue profoundly, but that is to be expected in a democracy, where law becomes the common ground of argument. The problem is that by a kind of idolatrous leap law becomes not only the common ground (since we accept no other common authority) but the source of all judgment, the only standard, as if law's function were not to reflect justice but to create it. Discussions about abortion frequently lead to the question, "Should people be *allowed, or forbidden*, to have abortions?" The implication is that what is forbidden for legal reasons is bad, and what is allowed is good, and the overlap between law and justice happens so neatly, with such thorough congruence, that the question becomes a matter of what can or should be imposed upon people by the state. Law and morality embrace, wisdom is equated with legislation, and Caesar is lord over all.

Everyone is let off the hook this way: no one needs to persuade anyone of the truth, the wisdom, or the decency of a particular position. But surely this is what must be done where the issue is as important as abortion, and the country is so nearly evenly divided. Where law is made the absolute standard the issue itself becomes less important than the desire to win, to force an interpretation not only of law but of life on someone else.

Pro-choice people often accuse the anti-abortion people of doing just that. In their view reasonableness requires an open-ended view of human life and its origins, one which in the absence of clear and agreed-upon definitions of humanity would allow abortion to those who choose it. It cannot be proven that fetal life is human; therefore it may be taken. But to accept this as the proper view of tolerance in a democracy is to accept a particular orthodoxy. To insist that in the absence of a proof of human life, life may be taken, is to make a moral judgment as arbitrary as any made by right-to-life people. The assumption here is that human life depends upon our definition of human life. If we cannot agree on a definition, then we must allow any liberty at all to be taken with the subject under discussion—whether that subject is unborn, retarded, or comatose. Those three conditions, after all, do play rough with definitions of humanity which require us to put at the center of our defining such qualities as consciousness, self-awareness, and the ability to form meaningful relationships.

The ordinary pro-choice argument assumes that there is no intrinsic value to life. Value is given, or withheld, by human beings. It is not a quality which is inherent in the fact of our having been conceived.

No one, for example, argues that life in some form does not begin with conception; everyone agrees that unless it is interfered with, what begins at conception will become what we call human. What is argued about is whether life at that point matters. Mystery is a bad word these days, but mystery and reverence are involved here. There is in the argument that we may kill a life which cannot be proven human a total lack of any sense of human mystery, a lack of love for the darkness all of us come from. To fail to

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regard it with love or reverence, to see it as a possible killing ground, is a sign of what we think of humanity.

This is a religious issue, as slavery was, as war always is, as the arms race is and will be. It isn't the religion most Americans are comfortable with, the publicly acceptable variety which endorses the way we live. It is religious insofar as it involves attitudes toward life and life's meaning which lie beyond the realm of proof and disproof. What is not commonly seen is that it is religious on both sides: the people who oppose the anti-abortion movement on what they consider reasonable democratic grounds are, more often than not, believers in a world view as undemonstrable as that of their opponents. The pro-life people believe that life's value is inherent in the fact of its being there at all. They believe that life is given. Given-ness implies a giver, and a value conferred in the simple fact of existence. That is, plainly, religious. But to argue that life has no inherent value, or to argue that if there is such a value it matters so little that we may agree to disagree and stand by while lives whose value cannot be proven are destroyed—this is to argue something equally metaphysical, equally undemonstrable. It says that value is conferred only, or at least most importantly, by human beings. Many pro-choice people want a surrender to their worldview, which was born at the Enlightenment. Their resentment is that an older orthodoxy is not willing to accept their victory, and die quietly.

There is no easy way out of the dilemma. Some congressmen have tried to get a congressional resolution passed which would simply define human life as beginning at conception. This is an appalling notion: it would extend the power of the state to a final and terrible degree. I believe that human life begins at conception; but I cannot imagine that God has waited for the U.S. Congress to endorse his work. If Congress can take to itself the right to say what human life is, it can equally say what lives are not human, or at least what lives can be dealt with as if they were not. It has been doing this in practice for years, but I would hate to see it made official. JOHN GARVEY

Of several minds: *Thomas Powers*

YESTERDAY'S TALISMANS

THE HIDDEN MEANING OF THE FLEA MARKET

LAST SUMMER, at an auction in Vermont, I saw a 1940 Indian motorcycle. It had been painted red. The seat was the sort they call a bicycle seat—triangular in shape with a generous cupping curve in the rear supported by two large springs The feel of the seat was deep and liquid. Behind the seat was a pair of commodious leather saddlebags with chrome buckles, and in the righthand pocket was the original owner's manual. I don't know enough about motorcycles to tell you much about this particular model. I heard somebody say it had been built for the U.S. Army but was discontinued after the first thousand. Originally its color had been olive drab. It was a long, low, heavy, fat-tired machine, and I lingered around it, for reasons I can't easily explain, the better part of two hours. So did a number of other men. They stood there arms folded, admiring the solid curve of the front fender, the headlight on a swivel mount, the brass fuel pump. The men told motorcycle stories or World War II stories or just talked numbers—engine size, tire pressure, the price it might bring, the year Indian started in business, the year Indian went out of business. A rumor went around that a buyer for Robert Redford—or maybe it was Steve McQueen—had come a thousand miles just to bid on this machine. Nobody doubted it. I've forgotten what it went for, but it was a good deal—as much as a new car with a lot of extras. I certainly didn't have that kind of money for a motorcycle I might ride twice a year and neither did any of the other men, but I don't think any of us thought the buyer a fool. We understood him perfeectly. The true value of that Indian motorcycle—so miraculously preserved—could not be measured in dollars.

There is something curious about the charged talismanic significance of objects of recent origin. Age has little to do with it. Greek bronzes can stop you in your tracks and elicit a kind of cathedral mood, but there's a formal quality to the encounter. One is on one's good behavior. Perhaps this is the result of the typical museum setting—especially in this country where Greek bronzes are reverently displayed in rooms of immaculate white, dramatically lit from above. Naturally, with such an unmistakable nudge from the authorities, one speaks in whispers.

But that isn't the only difference between the truly ancient and the barely antique. The treasures from the tomb of King Tutankhamun are enough to put anyone into a thoughtful mood. In the national museum in Cairo, where I saw them in 1975, they were badly lit, crowded into display cases, erratically labeled, in no comprehensible order. At the Metropolitan Museum in New York the cues of lighting and setting could hardly have been more emphatic; the viewer was grabbed by the lapels and given a good talking to. It didn't really make much difference. The gold masks and jewelry and painted boxes looked pretty much the same in both places: breathtakingly old, fragile, and alien. Both times I remember thinking: this is our last chance to see so deeply into the past. Now these things have been found, they'll soon be lost, dispersed, and destroyed for good. You can't entrust things to men. They'd survived in the tomb since 1325 B.C. Can anyone in this world imagine the national museum in Cairo, or the Met in New York, will last 3200 years? Finding those objects, and putting them on display, is our way of destroying them.

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A museum is a way of reminding us that all things pass. The objects precious enough to display there are a kind of proof how utterly dead and gone is the world which created them. The distance between us and them is very great; a museum reminds us that soon there will be no bridge at all, hardly more than the memory of a memory. These are interesting emotions and are one reason we have museums and visit them once a year, when it's raining on Saturday and the kids are restless. But looking at a Greek bronze, or a suit of French armor of the twelfth century, or even a Pre-Raphaelite painting is not at all like looking at a 1940 Indian motorcycle. No one personally misses Periclean Athens, but 1940—that was ours.

Not long after the auction a friend and his wife came for drinks and we got to talking about comic books. It turned out my friend and I had liked many of the same titles, especially the EC line which flourished for three or four years—the very briefest of Golden Ages—between 1950 and 1953 or '54: *Two-Fisted Tales*, *Weird Science*, *Tales from the Crypt*, and so on. The names and styles of the artists are still vivid in my mind, people like John Severin, who did the best Indians—I mean American Indians—in the history of comics; and Wally Wood, who did the best interiors of space ships; and Harvey Kurtzman, a man of many-faceted genius (he practically invented *Mad*, among other things; the first *Mad*, the great *Mad*) and an artist of formidable power. Kurtzman did a number of stories about the Korean War—one called "if," for example, about a GI fatally wounded by a stray mortar round. In that story was all the blind meaningless chance of war. Another was about a house built by a Korean family, destroyed at the end by a single artillery shell. In that story was all the blind meaningless waste of war. Kurtzman may have been the greatest of them all, the perfect marriage of style and substance.

My friend remembered many of these artists and stories too. We are hardly alone in this. The collecting of comics is a robust industry, with trade magazines (called "fanzines") and annual conventions. The complete *Two-Fisted Tales*, for example, has been republished in four large volumes on heavy stock, $65 for the boxed set. It is not at all uncommon for the originals to bring $25 or $30 a copy, and the last time I checked, the price of the first issue of *Action* (the original home of Superman, the appeal of whom escapes me; but to each his own) was around $1,000.

My friend and I tried to find an explanation for the appeal of these artifacts. All sorts of answers jumped to mind. For one thing, of course, they were good of their kind. They reminded us of our childhood. They were completely outside the official culture crammed into us at school. They were bright and sensational. They are no longer published. Their survival is a kind of miraculous accident, considering the treatment they got and the paper they were printed on. They were ours. And so on and so forth.

But none of these explanations touched the heart of their appeal, the thing they share in common with all the other residue of their time—the baseball cards, Coca Cola trays, World War II "loose lips sink ships" posters, movie stills, 45 rpm records, bomber jackets, Flexible Flyer sleds, table radios in wood cabinets, "I Like Ike" buttons, Mickey Spillane paperbacks, toy soldiers, Donald Duck watches, Lionel trains, old copies of *Fortune* filled with Packard and Cadillac ads, Stanley wood planes, wicker porch chairs, Prince Edward tobacco tins, gooseneck desk lamps. If you've ever been to a flea market you'll know what I mean. People wander slowly from stand to stand, solemnly fingering the artifacts of the recent past. A great poet might write a great elegy on this subject. In the nineteenth century the recent past did not exert such a tug on the emotions. That was a time of confidence that things were getting better. Everybody wanted the latest. The old was synonymous with the worn-out, the useless, the outmoded. The people of that time were great chuckers-out. Or so I imagine. It's different now. Things are moving quickly. Mere decades are as distinct as geologic ages. In a flea market it's all still there. You could pick your year and, given a little time and money, rebuild the vanished era down to the smallest detail. 1940 is perfectly preserved.

Things speak unmistakably of their time. A couple of weeks ago a friend and I, returning to the city from the country, passed an old Army & Navy store alongside the highway. Behind the one-story cinderblock building was a bomber. Olive drab tarpaulins covered the two engines and the cockpit. Neither one of us had ever seen such a plane before, outside of the movies, and we stopped to ask what it was. The wife of the owner told us it was a B-25 Mitchell bomber of the sort Doolittle used in his raid on Tokyo only a few months after Pearl Harbor. After the raid the planes had to be ditched in China or Southeast Asia, I forget where. They couldn't carry enough fuel for a round trip.

We went out back and walked around the plane. The tires were flat, there were holes in the wing, we could see inside the fuselage through a missing door. I was about eighteen months old when Doolittle made his raid. My friend hadn't even been born yet. All the same, the B-25 Mitchell bomber is a relic of our past. Back then there was a strict limit to the range of a bomber. It didn't last long, and now the bombers can circle the globe.

You can fake a painting, perhaps, but you can't fake a plane, or a ship, or an old car. They are unmistakably of their time—something we have outlived. Things that are past are ours. In a sense they are safe, as we were too—then—had we but known it. Perhaps that is the source of their magic. When an old car passes down the street, everybody turns his head. There goes his childhood, which can no longer be disturbed.

Recently I came across an old photograph dated unmistakably by a car. It looked like a Chevrolet of 1937 or '38. It is parked in front of a small white frame building with a large sign on it, and an immensity of sky behind it. In large letters the sign reads: "LOS ALAMOS PROJECT MAIN GATE." Below it in smaller letters is the legend: "Passes must be presented to guards." That's all there is—the car, the building, the sign, and the sky. For me, at any rate, it has a charged talismanic significance.

THOMAS POWERS

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ONLY THE CHURCHES HAVEN'T CHANGED

Is Swedish sex for us?

DEANE WILLIAM FERM

THIS PAST SPRING I visited Sweden for the purpose of bringing up to date my research on Swedish attitudes toward sexual behavior. A sabbatical leave in Sweden fifteen years ago had given me a first-hand opportunity to investigate the relationship between the churches of Sweden and developing Swedish sexual practices. I returned a few years later to the First International Symposium on Sexology to join forty other experts from around the world in learning about sex in the land of the midnight sun. This visit was the impetus for my book *Responsible Sexuality Now* (Seabury, 1971), a comparison of Swedish and American sexual attitudes.

In both of these earlier trips I got the clear impression that the Lutheran state church and the free churches renounced all sexual relationships outside of marriage even though Swedish society was moving in the direction of a completely permissive view of sexual behavior. The Swedes contended that sex is a private matter and that the state should stay out of the bedrooms except in situations involving children. Some of the consequences of this approach were that contraceptives were obtainable as easily as gumdrops; eighty percent of boys and sixty-five percent of girls had sexual relationships before eighteen; going steady included bed privileges apparently on the grounds that "the couple that sleeps together keeps together;" movies showed stark-naked men and women copulating and masturbating; articles advocated extramarital thrills and short-term marriages; etc. It was the incarnation of a brave new world of sexual pleasure which in those days the United States found shocking, to say the least.

So I returned this April to learn what had happened to the good life since the 1960s. I knew that my own country had caught up with the Swedes in the area of sexual tolerance; what on earth could the Swedes come up with now to show us the way?

In social legislation affecting the family, male-female relationships, and sexuality, Sweden has continued in her ways. Here are a few recent developments. Since 1975 abortion is free on demand through the eighteenth week of pregnancy. Sterilization is now free for any man or woman at least twenty-five years of age. The Joint Custody of Children Act of 1976 provides that both parents, whether or not married, may share the custody and financial support of their children. That same Act eliminates all legal distinctions between children born inside or outside of marriage. The Marriage Act now stipulates that "both parties are obliged to contribute to the support of the family and to care of the house and the children." The National Board of Health has recommended that homosexuality should no longer be considered a disease. In 1979 a law was passed which prohibits parents from spanking their children. Beginning this year a law will enforce equality between men and women in working life, including equal pay for equal work, with an "Equality Commissioner" and her/his committee to decide controversial cases. A law that took effect this year permits a parent to stay home with a sick child (up to twelve years of age) for sixty days a year. The mother or father can have a nine-month "parents" leave after the birth of a child, with ninety percent of their pay guaranteed by the state. About six thousand fathers a year have taken advantage of this opportunity. And for the past ten years parents have had the right to a six-hour working day until the baby is eighteen months old.

What about the no-holds-barred acceptance of sexual behavior? And had the churches abandoned their strict traditional no-sex-outside-of-marriage stance? This second question produced the expected answer. "No change whatsoever," responded Ingmar Ström, the retired bishop of Stockholm whose book *Kom och Se* (a revised edition is being published this year) stands virtually alone in its honest attempt to come to terms with the contemporary sexual attitudes of young people. This book has had a wide use in its German version; it deserves an English translation. Ström noted a recent official statement

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of the bishops of Sweden reaffirming their stand of 1951 which rejected all outside-marriage sex as contrary to God's law. "The official church position hasn't changed one bit on sex; it is totally irrelevant," lamented Carl Gustav Boethius, the outspoken former editor of the Church of Sweden's magazine *Vår Kyrka* and former president of the Swedish Sex Education Association (RFSU). This view was confirmed again and again by Swedish pastors and lay people, many of whom—especially the younger ones—did not go along with their church's teaching. So that question was easily answered.

BUT WHAT about the carefree sex of the sixties? What were the Swedish sex leaders of that time saying today? Here I met a radically different response. "We went too far. . . . We were naive. . . . Young people today have no sense of values. . . . The fabric of our society is disintegrating. . . . We need more governmental control." These were typical comments from those very individuals who ten years ago were in the vanguard of sexual liberation. What about the much vaunted sex education in the public schools which has been compulsory in Sweden since 1956? The 1979 RFSU annual report stated: "Our idea is that many young people are not 'ready' for the sex information when it is given in school." The state-appointed Commission on Sex Education recently declared:

> In the Commission's opinion, the excessively early sexual relationships that occur should be combated by other aspects of teaching than a general recommendation of restraint while one is young . . . the Commission contends that it should actively try to combat excessively early relationships.

Carl Gustav Boethius now regrets the lifting of all restrictions on pornographic literature, for he soon realized how unscrupulous commercial enterprises have misused this freedom, especially in their exploitation of the young. He has been at the forefront of a campaign to urge the government to enact a law forbidding pornography depicting children, a movement that proved successful this year. Boethius has also been distressed about a recent survey of young people in a section of Stockholm that indicated that the *average* age for first sexual encounter for girls was down to 14.4 years and that a large number of these girls report that "they get nothing out of sex." Elizabeth Wettergren, secretary of RFSU in the late 1960s, now regrets that her organization went too far in the privatization of sex and she now wants the government to exercise more control over its citizenry. She believes that children need definite guidelines and constraints for their difficult adolescent years.

It is perhaps not so difficult to understand this change of views when one notes some of the disturbing consequences of the sexual-revolution. In 1966 14.5 percent of new mothers were unmarried; by 1973 the percentage had increased to 28. The percentage of legal abortions has risen from 32.6 percent of all teenage pregnancies in 1971 to 50 percent in 1975. Ninety-two percent of all pregnant girls age fifteen received abortions, which surely indicates that abortion has become a leading form of birth control. Some forms of venereal disease among the young have continued to increase (especially chlamydia) which suggests that in this respect sex education is sadly remiss. The widespread use of the oral contraceptive has now been curtailed due to adverse health effects. In 1979, ten percent fewer women used the "pill" than the previous year. The condom is "in" again. Pornographic literature is rampant as are dirty movies (mostly American made) and sex shops. In a related matter alcoholism has become a major youth problem. In spite of the high cost of alcohol in Sweden, young people manage to gulp it down in expanding quantities. A recent editorial in Stockholm's *Dagens Nyheter* pointed out that every third thirteen-year-old gets drunk at least once a month and the prediction is that one of every ten youngsters will become an alcoholic.

The aims and interests of RFSU have changed over the years, from urging the privatization of sex and giving out information and contraceptives in the 1960s to advocating sexual equality and campaigning against rape, pornography, and prostitution in the late 1970s. Eva Hedlund, a social worker, has written extensively on rape and also the need to change existing Swedish laws that continue to discriminate against women. She and her associates at RFSU are working hard to change the concept of pornography from primarily "dirty pictures and words" to what sexist and degrading human imagery these words and pictures imply. RFSU is also beginning to take a more active role to promote sexual equality in all segments of society, with a particular emphasis on reaching men. One of their approaches in this regard is "consciousness-raising" camps for men. A RFSU-sponsored pilot project on the island of Gotland has succeeded in lowering the abortion and venereal disease rates among young people. In addition, youth contraceptive clinics have been set up to encourage young people to come and discuss their sexual identity with trained counselors. Very few have taken advantage of this approach. The percentage of boys is particularly low; of 350 visitors at the Stockholm clinic in 1975 only one was a boy. Why this lack of young male interest? RFSU responds rather lamely: "Could it be that boys, with external sexual organs, are able to reassure themselves more easily than girls with their internal sexual organs?"

While one can commend these important new directions for RFSU, this organization is failing to cope with some results of the carefree sexual attitudes which it helped to stimulate in the 1960s. Although its present leaders now realize the importance of stressing authentic human relationships in imparting sex information, it is disclaiming responsibility for any leadership role in improving the content of sex education or in promoting any special kinds of relationships as normative. For example, Boethius says that in the five years (1974-1979) that he was president of RFSU, the role and importance of marriage was never even discussed. When I asked the present RFSU staff whether their organization took any stand for or against marriage or the importance of one-to-one relationships or the priority of male-female relationships for most people, they dismissed my queries as "American questions which we do not understand."

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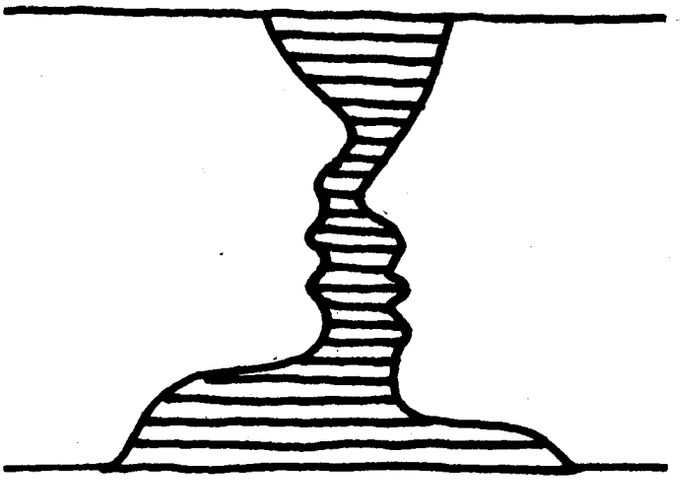

Maj Fant, the new secretary of RFSU, in explaining to me why RFSU is interested in combating pornography but not in advocating preference for certain kinds of relationships, stated without any sense of contradiction: "Pornography is social; sexual relationships are personal." (The only interpersonal questions RFSU deems worth discussing is whether avowed homosexuals should be permitted to raise children. Their leaders are divided on that issue.) The clear implication is that interpersonal relationships are a private matter and equally valid, echoes of a view of sexual behavior promulgated ten years earlier yet now widely criticized by the leaders of that period.

The State Commission on Sex Education takes a similar neutral position: "Many young people today build a family without marrying. Teaching in personal relationships should not take sides for or against their views and actions." And although this Commission is concerned about "excessively early sexual relationships," it also believes that contraceptives should now be given to the lower age level (age 7-9 years). It appears as though RFSU, the government, and the schools all see the weakness in their past emphasis on information at the expense of the enhancement of loving interpersonal relationships; yet they all disclaim responsibility for the complex issue of upholding any particular relationships as preferable to others.

So I left Sweden this time with a much different impression than I had gained on my earlier visits. Sexual utopia had not been achieved. Those very Swedish leaders who earlier had bravely cried "Freedom!" are now ruefully shouting: "Restraints! Restraints!" The modern social legislation which nobly upheld the rights of individuals—children, parents, families—has led to serious abuses. But what distresses me even more is that so many influential individuals and groups have refused to clarify and suggest positive ways in which sexual attitudes and behavior can be enriched yet controlled in a pluralistic society.

SURELY the United States has lessons to learn from the developments in Sweden this past decade. My guess is that this country is today where the Swedes were ten years ago. So what do we do about it? It is not enough to adopt the stance of the Swedish bishops and say that it's all wrong and nasty and contrary to God's law. Such an approach makes no contact with most people these days. Somehow we must steer a middle course between too much freedom and too many restraints. Here are a few areas in which we should learn from the Swedes as we develop our own policy on sexuality.

1. We have the most to gain from Swedish social legislation which forbids sexual discrimination and promotes the rights of children. We would do well to follow the Swedes in enacting laws enforcing complete equality between women and men in their work, their wages, and their need to take care of their small children. Equally important are laws prohibiting all forms of child abuse.

2. We should have compulsory sex education in the public schools. Such a program should provide information about birth control methods to early high school students. It should not neglect to outline the possible adverse effects of the indiscriminate use of oral contraceptives and the IUD. However, such sex education must stress the indispensable values of responsibility, fidelity, and love in sexual relationships. Needless to say, only a certain type of teacher would be effective in these courses. The new Swedish handbook on sex education, unlike its earlier version, underscores the importance of consideration for others, personal integrity, and sexual equality. The handbook states:

> No one can be allowed to regard another person as a means for one's own interests and needs. . . . Sexual activity which is an integral part of a close relationship is more fulfilling than impersonal and casual sexual activity and is something worth striving for.

It is this holistic emphasis that we need to develop.

3. Abortions should be free and legal for every woman up to the eighteenth week of pregnancy. I realize that my view on this point runs counter to the editorial stance of *Commonweal* and the positions of many of its readers. Nonetheless, despite the many anguishing aspects of this question, I remain convinced that abortion is in some cases "the least worst" of several alternatives—which should take place only after the other alternatives have been seriously considered. And since the legality of abortion has been established by the United States Supreme Court, it is simply neither fair nor just for the law to apply only to those who can afford it.

However, abortion should never be a form of birth control. The rising rate of abortions for American women is frightening. The abortion question has been discussed extensively in America often in a false context. It is not primarily a matter of a woman's right to have control over her own body. Abortion is at the very least the taking of a potential human life. This moral dimension of abortion should be stressed in any strong program of public education. Instructors should discourage widespread reliance on the abortion solution while they encourage and provide information about safe and effective methods of birth control. New channels for the distribution of birth control to teenagers must also be explored. Here preventive medicine is crucial.

4. A pluralistic society must be willing to tolerate diverse

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standards and styles of behavior, but this does not mean that all such standards and styles are of equal worth or even valid for most people. The Swedes, while trying to be all things to all people, have refused to suggest specific norms for interpersonal relationships other than the general guidelines of sexual equality, respect for others, and personal honesty. But these guidelines, however noble, can be rationalized to cover one-night stands and close encounters of different kinds. It is precisely at this point of specific norms that the Swedes have failed.

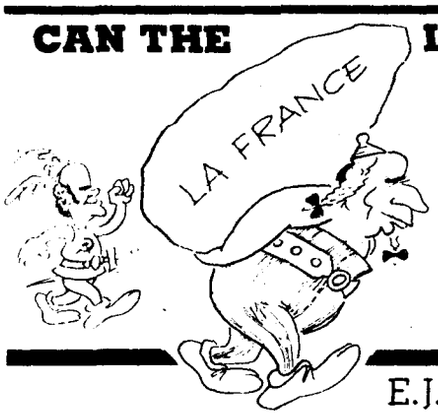
I hastily admit that the proposal of specific norms to guide concrete forms of sexual expression is an extremely problematic task. Yet this is the area in which many people need the most direction and where the churches can provide effective leadership. I worry about the casual attitude toward sex these days that puts it in the category of eating and urinating, as the simple expression of a necessary bodily function. There is a spiritual dimension to sexuality which, if absent, renders interpersonal relationships cheap, manipulative, and even degrading. Intercourse is at its best an expression of love and fidelity. And the dimension of permanence or at the very least the aspiration toward permanence is a crucial aspect of any genuine sexual relationship.

In our society, permanence means one-to-one faithful sexual relationships usually geared toward ultimate expression in marriage. Both marriage and the nuclear family are presently deemed essential to the healthy stable society currently envisioned by most Americans. Although these are norms for most people, for others the minimal norm should be one-to-one faithful relationships which promote mutual caring and equality.

I have suggested specific norms with respect to social legislation, sex education, abortion, birth control, sexual relationships, marriage, and the family. I realize that my recommendations will be considered too vague and that I am in for a sound scolding from proponents on both sides of each issue. It is not easy in a pluralistic society to steer a course between the libertarians who advocate complete equality of lifestyles and authoritarians who are sure that there is only one correct way in all matters affecting sexual attitudes and behavior. Who am I to decide what is best for most people? Can even a government make such a judgment for its citizenry? Americans are far less ready than Swedes to give to their government the power to enact laws, for example, that promote sex education in the public schools and prohibit certain kinds of pornography.

My encounter with the Swedish experience of recent years has convinced me that the "to each her/his own" approach to sexuality leads to serious adverse consequences and the "contrary to God's law" prohibition falls on deaf ears. Creative efforts must be directed at this difficult issue, perhaps doomed to be a compromise but nonetheless necessary. A failure of nerve at this juncture will only make our elaborate theories useless and ludicrous. Can those who represent the middle ground agree on certain specific norms for sexual morality and interpersonal relationships or are we fated to engage in the kind of infighting that will continue to result in a field day for the extremists on both sides of this perplexing moral and social dilemma?

CAN THE LEFT TURN A VICTORY INTO A MANDATE?



Mr. Mitterand & Mr. Reagan

E.J. DIONNE JR.

THE OLDEST RULE about elections is also the most widely ignored, especially by the winning side. It is that most elections are about throwing the bums out, or keeping them in.

The great political scientist, V. O. Key, put it more elegantly, referring to elections as retrospective referenda on the performance of the party in office. Generally, Key said, voters aren't voting about what they want in the future; they're making a judgment about what went on in the past. If things seem to be going well—the inflation rate and the unemployment rate always seem to be the most relevant measures here—the voters usually reelect a government. When times are bad, incumbents usually lose.

This obvious rule is often ignored after the polls close, especially by the victors, who seek in the election returns a mandate for whatever ideological course they wish to pursue. Thus, Ronald Reagan's victory, which was largely a rejection of Jimmy Carter's record in office, was said to herald a great move to the right.

Enter François Mitterand. Mr. Mitterand, the architect of France's revived Socialist party, won a startling election victory running on a platform substantially stronger than one often finds with social democratic parties elsewhere. Moreover, Mr. Mitterand ended twenty-three years of center-right government in France, and in the process did great

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damage to the French Communist party vote. Progressives will no doubt be eager to make of Mitterand's victory what conservatives have tried to do with Ronald Reagan's.

Yet despite the vast ideological gulf that separates them, both Mr. Reagan and Mr. Mitterand owe their victories to much the same factors: high inflation, high unemployment, and unpopular incumbents. Valery Giscard D'Estaing was widely disliked for imperiousness, Jimmy Carter for bumbling. And the fact is that both Reagan and Mitterand only barely improved on the vote of their party in the previous election. Mr. Reagan got fifty-one percent of the vote, only three points more than Gerald Ford won in 1976. (The landslide quality of Reagan's victory came from John Anderson's vote.) Mr. Mitterand also improved on his 1974 vote by three points, from forty-nine to fifty-two percent.

At the very least, the Mitterand victory will make it harder for conservative analysts to point to a "worldwide conservative trend," as they have enjoyed doing by billboarding Mr. Reagan's victory alongside that of Margaret Thatcher's Tories in Britain. Now it looks more like a worldwide Anglo-Saxon conservative trend, and anyway Thatcher is in trouble. Moreover, not only has Mitterand won, but so did, among others, René Levesque's social democratic *Parti Quebecois*. (That, perhaps, is a sign of a worldwide Gallic trend to the left.)

On the other hand, electoral victories, even squeakers, can be used for ideological purposes, especially if people are particularly unhappy with the governments they've just voted out of office. President Reagan has certainly made effective use of his victory and seems, so far, to have brought public opinion along behind his stoutly conservative program. It is important, though, that Mr. Reagan has done this not by defending attacks on particular programs, but by saying that *his* package of cuts is necessary for economic recovery. It would be hard, for example, to argue that cutting legal services for the poor will in itself have a bracing impact on capital investment or inflation. It has been left to the usually frank New Right to explain what these cuts are really about. Howard Phillips, head of the Conservative Caucus, recently presented David Stockman with an award, saying that without Mr. Stockman, "the prospects for de-funding the left simply wouldn't be there."

So you might think that Mr. Mitterand would also have a shot at social transformation, albeit of a different kind. And he certainly has an opportunity. But he has two factors working against him that Mr. Reagan does not have to deal with: capitalists and Communists.

When Mr. Reagan was elected, the stock market soared; when Mr. Mitterand won, the French stock market dropped by twenty percent. The simple fact is that it is easier to govern for and with the economic powers that be than without them and against them. Mr. Reagan's program is disputed in its specifics by a variety of Wall Street types, but on balance, there is unanimity in that crowd about the desirability to cut taxes and cut programs. Mr. Reagan does not have to worry about a flight of capital to Switzerland. But Mr. Mitterand, like all left reformers, does. And so he has spent a lot of his time reassuring the forces of the well-to-do he vanquished in the election that life won't be so bad for them after all. "My intention is to convince, not to defeat," he said in his inaugural address. "There was only one victor on May 10—hope. May it become the best-shared asset in France."

No doubt Mr. Mitterand's opponents to his left are already suggesting with a chuckle that hope is about the only asset Mr. Mitterand intends to redistribute. But of course his concern about the flight of capital is very much to the point. Capital flight could crush French hopes for a form of socialism that reconciles social change with liberty. Yet unless one is really willing to opt for a dangerous concentration of all economic resources in the state, private capital will always be a factor. No one ever said democratic socialism would be easy.

But Mr. Mitterand also has to worry about the French Communist party, whose leadership constitutes one of the most pro-Soviet collection of politicians this side of the Kremlin. The French Communists got their well-deserved comeuppance from the voters this year—and suffered especially at their base. Tired of the Communists' opportunistic attacks on the Socialists, traditional Communist voters defected in large numbers, especially in their old bastions, the working-class suburbs around Paris. The Communist leaders, who have been accustomed to switching sides quickly ever since the Hitler-Stalin pact, then saw their mistake and rallied to Mitterand after the failure of their candidate, Georges Marchais, in the first round of voting. The Communists want seats in Mitterand's government after the legislative elections this month, and will probably get some minor posts.

Probably no one has less of an interest in a successful Socialist government than the Communists. They have already lost lots of ground, and if Mr. Mitterand can show that a reformist, libertarian socialism can work, the defections could become greater. The Communists have thrived when the right was firmly in power and they maintained their ghetto of protest on the left; successful socialism could lead to a withering away of the Communist party.

But unless Mr. Mitterand's party wins an unlikely majority in the legislative elections, he will have to rely on Communist votes to govern. It is likely that Mr. Mitterand would prefer a coalition with the political center, and the cabinet he has appointed reflects concessions to centrists and left-wing Gaullists. This cabinet is likely to help Mitterand with the electorate, but French politics has been polarized for so long that an appeal to politicians of the center could prove difficult. Mr.

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Mitterand, who has always been regarded as a crafty politician, will be putting his craftiness to the ultimate test. His newly named Prime Minister, Pierre Mauroy, is also a genuine pol who has frequently done battle with the Communists, and he could help.

From the point of view of other left movements, and notably those in the United States, the platform assembled by Mr. Mitterand's Socialists offers something to look into. For one thing, the French Socialists have placed great stress on personal liberties, and on the need to free French state-owned television from the partisan and bureaucratic weight of the government. For another, it has opted for greater decentralization. This was always a popular cause on the New Left, and the French Socialists have been influenced by some New Left ideas. American liberals have often associated decentralization with "states' rights," always a cover for the maintenance of power in the hands of Southern oligarchies. Yet decentralization is by no means an inherently conservative theme, and it will be part of Mr. Mitterand's job to prove it.

As far as foreign policy goes, Mr. Mitterand's rhetoric has combined two noble sentiments: opposition to Soviet expansionism and sympathy for the Third World—and in particular for those movements in the Third World seeking economic reform. The former can be welcomed by the United States, though just what it will mean in practice is less clear. (On the other hand, democratic socialists are often more convincing anti-Communists than are conservatives.) His views on the Third World will, quite obviously, clash with Mr. Reagan's.

On one issue, Mr. Mitterand will lay down a challenge to left movements elsewhere—and serve as a counter-example to those who say that only conservatives are really on Israel's side. Mr. Mitterand has long had strong sympathies for Israel, and Israel's progressive supporters were offered the incongruously pleasant sound the day after the French election of Menachem Begin welcoming a socialist victory.

However, the major tests for Mr. Mitterand's rhetoric on these issues will come where French interests are most directly affected. Among the former colonial powers, France has been exceptionally successful in maintaining economic and political influence with its former colonies—old colonialism in new bottles, say France's critics. The question being asked in these ex-colonial countries is whether Mr. Mitterand intends to change French policy to their advantage. As for Israel, the biggest test will be on arms sales to Arab countries; Mr. Mitterand has already given assurances that existing contracts will be honored. Arms are a major export for France, and the arms issue may constitute an acid test of Mitterand's international principles.

"Facts are stubborn," Pierre Mauroy once said. Governing any Western country these days is difficult. Governing France is often more difficult. And governing while seeking substantial changes—and having to do battle with Communists and wary holders of capital at the same time—can only be called, at best, not impossible. Then again, "Liberty, equality, and fraternity" has always been a tough standard, but one could do worse.

POST-TITO TENSION BETWEEN CHURCH & STATE

Opening old wounds in Yugoslavia

PEDRO RAMET

THE RELATIONS between the Catholic church and the Communist regime in Yugoslavia have taken a sharp turn for the worse since Tito's death, despite the apparent absence of substantive issues in contention. The growing acrimony may reflect a renewed struggle between church and state in this country of twenty-two million (in which perhaps six million are Catholics).

Yet, despite passage of a rather controversial law on religious communities in 1978, which the Croatian Catholic church actively sought to amend, church-state relations had seemed to have returned to normal and leaders in both hierarchies behaved as if there were no important frictions. Indeed, after Cvijetin Mijatovic, Yugoslavia's ceremonial head of state, visited Pope John Paul II in the Vatican in December, it was widely expected that relations would improve further.

Instead, things took a sudden turn for the worse. The peace was ostensibly broken in late January of this year when Jakov Blazevic, president of Yugoslavia's Republic of Croatia, opened fire on present members of the Croatian Catholic hierarchy for having collaborated with fascist *Ustase* forces during the Second World War. He also blasted alleged attempts to rehabilitate the late Cardinal Stepinac, whom the Yugoslav Communists had sent to prison in 1946 for treasonous collaboration with the *Ustase*. *Slobodna Dalmacija*, a Croatian newspaper published in Split, soon picked up the refrain and detailed various atrocities of which Stepinac was said to have been guilty. By the end of February, Jure Bilic,

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president of the Croatian Parliament and one of the ranking members of the Croatian party, had assailed "pro-fascist elements" within the church who "want to be dominant in society" and who have been exploiting the Stepinac issue with this end in mind. Even the Foreign Ministry became involved, warning that resurrection of the Stepinac case could produce no good and would only serve to sour relations between Yugoslavia and the Vatican.

Surprisingly, *Glas Koncila*, the news organ of the Croatian Catholic church, replied that no one had advocated a reopening of the Stepinac case or his rehabilitation and challenged the authorities to indicate why *they* were opening old wounds. Meantime, Archbishop Franjo Kuharic of Zagreb sprang to Stepinac's defense, describing the controversial cardinal as a "Croatian patriot and an esteemed church hierarch."

In rebuttal, Branko Puharic, a top leader in the Croatian Socialist Alliance (the Communist-led mass organization), recently named director of Radio-Television Zagreb, accused the church of meddling in politics and warned that by posing as the guardian of the rights of believers, the church *de facto* adopted the stance of opposition to the political status quo. Puharic again singled out alleged attempts to rehabilitate Stepinac which, he said, amounted to demanding the exoneration of the *Ustase* themselves.

Aloisius Cardinal Stepinac, who died in 1960 at the age of sixty-two, had been named Archbishop of Zagreb in 1937 and was highly critical of the Communist authorities in the early postwar period. In 1946, he was taken to court for collaboration with the enemy and, at the end of a spectacular and drawn-out show trial, was sentenced to sixteen years at hard labor. Despite continued Communist hostility toward him even at his death, overwhelming popular pressure forced the authorities to permit his interment in the main cathedral in Zagreb. Stepinac was widely viewed by Croats as a staunch defender of Croatian interests, even as a kind of patron saint of the Croatian nation.

It is in this light that one must examine the regime's latest volleys. Stepinac is not, in himself, the central issue any longer. But he aptly symbolizes two ecclesiastical currents which the regime views as inimical. First, he symbolizes the symbiosis of Croatian nationalism and Catholicism—an identification which has always been anathema to the regime, fearful that religiosity might be used to spur separatist sentiment. Second, Stepinac was archbishop at a time when the church was a powerful factor in Croatian politics and thus represents an earlier pattern, in which the church exercised a legitimate political role. That the leadership still fears the church's reserve political resources was obvious when Puharic told the presidium that "attempts are being made to turn the church into a real political force inside our society, or to be more precise, an opposition force."

It is tempting, in this connection, to recall an interview with *Der Spiegel* last July, in which Milovan Djilas, the former vice president of Yugoslavia turned regime-critic, speculated that "the [Catholic] church in Croatia could become the basis for a Christian-oriented party such as that in Italy or in the Federal Republic of Germany." While the church has not attempted anything so brash, and could scarcely be expected to as long as the Communist party remains in control, it has repeatedly attempted to broaden its prerogatives within the Socialist Alliance of Working People of Yugoslavia (SAWPY), and such endeavors may lie behind regime complaints of efforts to transform SAWPY into an opposition party.

STUDY GUIDE: "A Matter of Faith," a handbook opposing the nuclear arms race for churches and Christian groups. Articles and discussion questions, 100 pages. $3.50 each; 10-99 copies $3 each, etc. *Sojourners Book Service*, 1309 L St., N.W. Washington, D.C. 20005.

The latest church-state skirmishes were at least adumbrated in the early months following Tito's death, when *Glas Koncila* blasted Todo Kurtovic, chairman of SAWPY, for having accused the church of attempting to restore capitalism, forcing a retraction on Kurtovic's part by early October. But a more serious threat, from the point of view of the regime, was presented by a petition submitted by leading Croatian Catholic intellectuals and priests in December. This petition, addressed to the Federal Assembly, overstepped the bounds of what the regime recognizes as the legitimate domain of religious organizations in asking for an amnesty for all political prisoners. Prominent among the signators were Kivko Kusic, the chief editor of *Glas Koncila*, Dr. Jure Kolaris, assistant professor at the theological faculty in Zagreb, and Monsignor Solod, secretary of the bishops' conference. Finally, in his Christmas sermon in Zagreb, Archbishop Kuharic made public an earlier demand that the authorities give the church expanded access to imprisoned Catholics.

Hence, the attacks by Blazevic and Bilic, two of the leading hardliners in the Croatian party, may be viewed as a reaction to stirrings within the church itself and as signifying an effort to hold the line on the church. Blazevic, who played a leading role in the prosecution of Stepinac, is accustomed to the role of antagonist to church pressure and is sensitive to the proclivity of the Croatian Catholic church to exploit nationalist sentiment to its own purposes. Unquestionably the regime would prefer a Catholic church that would be docile and accommodating in the fashion of the (Serbian) Orthodox church. The church, for its own part, has unsuccessfully sought to have religious instruction reintroduced in schools and to increase its own visibility in the political process. Thus, neither church nor state is entirely satisfied with the status quo, and each realizes that the other is dissatisfied. This inevitably produces a certain tension in relations which is aggravated during periods of political fluidity. Tito's passing produced such a period of fluidity to the extent that no one in Yugoslavia could be certain that the transition would work as planned or how the resulting system would function. As new patterns of political decision-making stabilize, the threat of minatory change will recede and, presumably, church-state relations will return to the status quo ante. In the meantime, their respective hierarchs continue their political tug-of-war, each hoping to gain ground and neither confident, for the moment, of the other's intentions.

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What to think about Northern Ireland

DAVID J. BOWMAN

MANY HAVE tried and failed to find a useful comparison that would help Americans to understand better the conflict in Northern Ireland. Undaunted, I shall try, relying on a metaphor I heard used by Rev. Ray Davey, Presbyterian founder of Corrymeela Reconciliation Center in Ballycastle, Northern Ireland.

The two politico-religious communities in Northern Ireland are like a young couple living in the husband's mother's house. She has given them the house as a wedding gift, provided she can live there with them as long as she wishes. They have loved and respected her, but time takes its toll as she "interferes" with their life and occasions much bickering over her presence. Their own faults add to the trouble between them. Finally the daughter-in-law is fed up and says: "Either she goes, or I go on a rampage to get her out."

Not all of this is Roy Davey's but the basic idea is. The mother, of course, is Great Britain; the husband is the Loyalist community, and the wife, the Nationalist. The "son," the one-million political majority in Northern Ireland, in general wants to keep "mother" around, as the guarantee of their "British" or mainly "Protestant" or "Ulster" way of life. They want to keep the power given to them in 1921, preserved by means of government-documented discrimination for fifty years, and threatened now by the Thatcher and Haughey governments' plans for a more cooperative relationship between the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland. They do not accept "Northern Irish" as their identity, because to them the word "Irish" means Gaelic and Catholic; they prefer "British" or since 1972, "Ulster-people." So much for "son."

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The "daughter-in-law," the half-million political minority in Northern Ireland, wants "mother" out if she will not guarantee their civil rights in jobs, housing, security, and a share in political power as a minority. They want also in general to preserve their Gaelic and mainly Catholic way of life. They would accept "Northern Irish" as their identity, but prefer simply "Irish." By no means all of them want an end to the border; few of them emigrate south, but rather choose Australia, New Zealand, or Canada—as do emigrants from the majority. So much for "daughter-in-law."

The "mother," Great Britain, set up the house in 1921 to satisfy the "son's" demand for a home of his own. She declared in 1949 that they would have it and she would stay there as long as the couple wanted her. Now she is more and more worn out from helping around the house, and from the growing antagonism of her daughter-in-law. She is losing her savings, and wonders what she can do to relieve the situation—but cannot think of anything new.

Within the two communities, extremists thrive. "Not an inch" has been a majority catchword. Keep all political power, achieved in "democratic" elections and promised by the Westminster government in 1949—a pledge that the link with Great Britain would remain unless a majority of voters in Northern Ireland declared against it. Use violence if threatened; the paramilitary groups have recently formed a common War Council, outnumbering the minority paras by far.

"Brits out" has been a minority catchword. Destroy Northern Ireland as a statelet . . . and the Republic, too, as soon as possible. Set up a total-island socialist state with the paramilitaries as the army and police. Use violence as the means to the goal. Reginald Maudling, U.K. Minister of State at the time, declared war on the IRA, so counter-violence is justified.

Three one-dimensional approaches to a multi-dimensional conflict are dangerous, and dangerously misleading. They are clear, apt as slogans, and disguised as to the propaganda that they are. "Not an inch" says the minority has no right to a voice in its own political life. "Brits out" says that "col-

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onists'' present there before the settlement of Jamestown in America have no right to remain in Northern Ireland.

Is it mainly a *religious* conflict? No—but *bad* religion has had a lot to do with it. I suspect that the idea that ''Protestant'' and ''Catholic'' should be described as *two* ''religions'' may well have come from Northern Ireland. The people there habitually speak of each other in these terms, giving the media ample excuse for over-simplifying identification by using religious instead of political, numerical, or ethnic terms. The young, especially in poor areas, are brainwashed this way. They live in segregated housing, attend segregated (because neighborhood) schools, and inherit bitterness from their parents. Christianity is all too often compromised by the culture of the community. ''Love your enemy'' seems preached only at funerals; to give the churches credit, forgiveness has usually been the theme of burial sermons, whether by Presbyterians as after the Bessbrook massacre or by Catholics at Bobby Sands's Mass. The IRA, of course, have made their funeral processions and graveside orations into a ritual, standardized declaration of vengeance.

WHAT KIND of conflict is it, then? The Haves against the Have-nots, the politically powerful against the weak, the poor of one ''tribe'' against the other's poor. Wee houses on the Protestant Shankill Road are as mean as the wee houses on the Catholic Falls Road. As always, the poor are the ones who suffer . . . and the young. The street fighters appearing on the TV news are teen-agers, boys and girls, masked like ''Halloweeners'' but playing a deadly serious role—sometimes simply deadly. What political wisdom do they have? Who sends them out to stone and petrol bomb? How much in common have they with ghetto-fighters in our appalling inner cities . . . except the color of their skin?

The H-Block prison and the hunger strikes are much in the news. What to think of them? No question about the abuses in arrest-trial-conviction procedures in the past. Over-severe sentences, brutal interrogators, forced confessions have been public knowledge long before the U.K.'s Bennett Commission itemized abuses. Relatives of prisoners from both communities have protested, as have clergy and some politicians.

Part of the problem in the judicial process comes from the refusal of many of those arrested to recognize the court, and from intimidating threats to families of prospective witnesses.

How estimate the greater woe? That of the grieving mother of Bobby Sands, or of the mother of Constable Ellis who was killed by a booby-trap bomb on the day of Sands's funeral? The fourteen dead on Bloody Sunday, or the fourteen burned to death in the La Mon Restaurant fire-bombing by the IRA? Maire Drumm shot in her hospital bed, or the young policewoman shot in her trailer while her three-year-old daughter hid behind her teddy-bear? Impossible to say . . . and impossible to guess how many in the Maze prison are thieves and criminals, and how many are there because they signed statements only after ''inhumane treatment.'' Certainly the first four hunger-strikers to die were not your all-Catholic, all-American types. Not their fault. History had captured their young lives, and destroyed them.

And what to think of the hunger-strike? Four have died, four more have taken their places, four hundred may be ready to follow. It is an ancient Irish way of protest, with a symbolic relation to the Great Famine of the 1840s. Moral theologians say it is a form of suicide if death is intended, but not if it is used as a non-lethal protest against injustice. After these deaths, a Mass was allowed, without paramilitary trappings inside the church; as it commonly does in such cases, the church left to God the judgment as to the person's conscience.

However, I would suggest that these hunger-strikes are immoral. Bobby Sands and everyone else knew that ''political status'' would not be given by the British, although some individual demands might be met, like personal clothing and more visits. Insisting that he was starving for ''political status,'' he doomed himself—and must have known he would occasion violence. Fifteen people died between March 1 and his death on May 5, most of them in connection with his fast. He could hardly have failed to realize that some such outrages would occur.

I suggest that this is a tragic case of claiming that the end justifies the means. The IRA's ''war'' is an unreal one; no government has declared war. It is much as if the Weathermen in the sixties said they were at war with the U.S.A. Similarly, the Ulster Freedom Fighters' tit-for-tat assassinations are ''justified'' by declaring war on the Provos. Once you declare war, any violence seems logical, and innocents also die.

We cannot anticipate what will happen in the next few weeks. The attempts to assassinate President Reagan and Pope John Paul II remind us how fragile *any* society is in the 1980s, particularly that of Northern Ireland. I hesitate to write this, but will do so. I breathed a sigh of relief, amid my shocked sorrow, when I heard the man who shot the pope was a Turk and not from Northern Ireland—much as I was relieved to hear young Hinckley was a middle-class white. Will the IRA go political, encouraged by their success in Fermanagh with Bobby Sands? Will they (more likely, I am sorry to say) plan a ''spectacular'' killing like that of seventy-nine-year-old Lord Mountbatten in Donegal in 1979? Will they invade a majority ghetto and provoke a shooting war in the streets? Or will the majority paramilitaries strike out on their own? Will Mr. Paisley's rhetoric bring out the extralegal ''law and order'' forces? Anything can happen, not much of it good.

I will suggest one ''next step'' that seems to me almost the

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only viable way forward at this juncture of conflicting and adamant interests. Mrs. Thatcher's government could hold a referendum in the *entire United Kingdom*—not merely in Northern Ireland where such votes are a mere formality—on keeping the political link between Northern Ireland and the Crown. My expectation is that the vote of United Kingdom citizens would be overwhelmingly against the link; polls taken in recent years indicate a growing majority in the U.K. in favor of phasing out the Army and the financial subsidy for Northern Ireland. In this sense, Northern Ireland is "Britain's Vietnam."

Such a vote would force Northern Ireland politicians and power-brokers to work out a deal acceptable to the majority of each community. Probably a Bill of Rights in Northern Ireland would be needed; the United Kingdom has none now. Perhaps a UN or EEC peace-keeping force would at last be invited in; Britain could declare Northern Ireland to be more than a merely internal matter. Certainly, political alternatives would be offered and sufficient time for the transition given. Some political directions have been proposed: a federal or confederal island, a larger "off-shore islands" confederacy, a six-county independent "Ulster." In March, Glencree and Corrymeela Reconciliation Centers co-sponsored a symposium on possible political developments in Northern Ireland; it brought together representatives from all political parties, north and south—and thereby proved something. But all that would come only after the United Kingdom referendum, and the British decision to let the Northern Irish settle it themselves.

To return to the metaphor. The "mother" would appeal to the extended family to take counsel about the young couple's predicament and her dissatisfaction. She would learn that the family advises her to leave the house to the pair and go live elsewhere. In the case of Northern Ireland, I think she (Great Britain) would then be delighted to get out, and force Northern Ireland to live in a wider world.

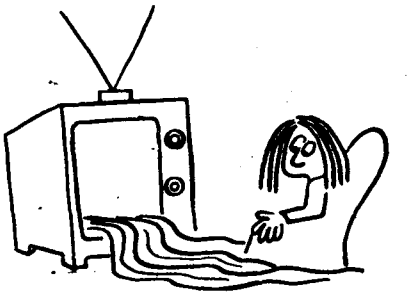
Media

THE FALLING SKY STORY

BACK TO YOU, WALTER

THE COVERAGE of news and public affairs on American television is something of a victory of moral man over immoral society: of some service to a value beyond the scramble for money within an institution devoted to the latter. But that scramble—the competitive struggle for ridiculously big audiences—has its effect, even on the news.

In a limited way the competition can sometimes be good. The then head of NBC News told me twenty-five years ago, just when a fellow named Chet Huntley had come to join another named David Brinkley to make a new NBC News, how grateful they were at NBC for Ed Murrow over at CBS. The NBC News division could use the standards that Murrow



had established, and the place that he had carved out within that competitive network, as a lever within their own. In that unusual case, ironically, the competition among the networks made the outcome better. Usually it doesn't.

On the whole, when you consider the medium within which it functions and the condition of the public's awareness before it arrived on the scene, the national network news is a positive achievement. It is more unequivocally so when you add public television. A citizen who watches a half hour of CBS or NBC nightly news, and the MacNeil/Lehrer Report, has a pretty good exposure to public affairs. And often in big events and crises television distinguished itself beyond the level of the nightly news.

But for all that, TV news has the flaws that stem from its commercial base. Like the rest of big television it must seek to hold the attention of a ridiculously big and polyglot audience in competition with other programs trying to steal that attention. From that necessity come the artificial emphases upon speed, brevity, celebrity, the visual, the dramatic, and on making things interesting. On never being boring. On never letting anything go on very long lest the audience's hand begin to itch for the knob.

From the point-of-view of the civic life of a democracy it is a screwy system. The most widely used means of communication about public affairs is an appendage to a mass entertainment medium. That entertainment, in its turn, is presented not in its own right but as a means of attracting viewers for commercial purposes.

Defects that follow from this odd arrangement are regularly evident in the news coverage—for example, in events of the last year (since I started writing these pieces) like the party conventions, the elections, the hostage crisis, the shooting of the president, and—a symbol of one point—an "event" our present news system itself created—the replacement of Cronkite by Dan Rather. In that case to an extreme, and in the hostage crisis to a lesser extent and in a different way, TV news showed its magnetic attraction to "people," to personality, to "human interest," in a way that distorts the true proportions of civic affairs.

The emphasis on speed, on a scoop, on being first—carried over in part from the heritage of newspaper journalism—has new dimensions with the rapidity of the electronic media, as election night coverage by the networks shows. The networks keep coming up with new ways to project winners and declare states to have been carried by particular candidates earlier than their rivals do, almost (it seems now) the instant anybody anywhere votes.

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Last November NBC, with its new methods of projecting results from exit polls, colored its map blue (for Reagan) hours before the polls had closed on the West Coast, causing citizens there to feel that their vote was useless, and damaging the prospects of some local candidates.

The networks, stuck with an institutional emphasis upon speedy reporting, were caught in serious errors on the day that President Reagan was shot. Various networks erroneously reported that James Brady was dead; that the president had not been hit; and that the president had had open heart surgery. As it happened this shooting was not, and did not become, the kind of crisis it might have been. Suppose it had? Suppose the networks had given the nation falsehoods as serious as these?

And the commercial base intruded in an explicit way. According to Tom Shales of the *Washington Post*, when CBS News took a local break at 3:25 on that Monday afternoon the Washington CBS affiliate ran two jolly commercials, "Hi ho Pimlico" and "Kenny Rogers's greatest hits." I was reminded when I read this that the first news of the shooting of Robert Kennedy, in June of 1968, was followed by an advertisement extolling the smoothness of Newport cigarettes. A joke in one of the media books puts it: "The World Comes to an End Tonight. Details after this message."

Last summer the networks were stuck with a commitment to cover conventions which by their criteria (false criteria, by the standard of the civic good) were not really newsworthy, since the outcomes were settled. Art Buchwald wrote a funny column which I paraphrase from memory:

Walter Cronkite: CBS News has just learned that nothing is happening on the floor. We go now to Bruce Morton at the podium for more on this story.

Morton: Walter, I have Senator Glockenspeigle from New Jersey here. Senator Glockenspeigle, is anything happening?

Glockenspeigle: No. Nothing is happening.

Morton: Now over to Leslie Stahl, with the California delegation, who reports that nothing's happening there either.

Stahl: Bruce, we've been talking with Governor Brown and with several delegates from California, and they say that nothing at all is happening. Now back to you in the booth, Walter.

That was a funny column, but I don't think that's the way it works. The networks have such high stakes in the time that they're taking to cover these things—every minute and every point in the ratings is worth millions—that they pretend something is happening, or make something happen, even if it isn't. In the way that announcers on sporting events keep telling you what an exciting game it is, even if it's not, so is it also with the news. It's really more like this:

Cronkite: We interrupt the vice-president's speech to bring you a startling news report. CBS News has just learned that the sky is falling. We go now to Bruce Morton for more on this story.

Morton: Yes Walter, CBS News has just learned that there's a report circulating among the delegates that the sky is falling. We have Senator Makeshift from Arkansas here with us. Senator Makeshift where did you hear this report?

Senator: Somebody in the Idaho delegation told me.

Reporter: This is Judy Woodruff at the Hotel Kitsch in downtown convention city, where CBS News has just learned that six delegations are packing up and leaving. Sir, will you tell CBS News why you are leaving?

Delegate: I'm getting out of here. We heard on the TV about the falling sky, and one of our delegates said something hit her on the head, too.

Cronkite: The party platform is being presented at the podium, but we're going to follow this fast-breaking falling sky story. We have a startling new development at the podium. Come in, Bruce Morton.

Morton: Walter, CBS News has just learned that the sky is *not* falling. We have the source of the story here with us, Governor Little of Idaho. Governor Chicken Little, tell us what happened.

Governor Little: Well I was coming out of this place called the Red Onion and I'd had a couple of these drinks they called the Wheero and something hit me on the head and I guess I did say something and some of the delegates from Idaho heard me.

Cronkite: Tonight at seven, ten central time, CBS News will present a special report on this remarkable story, The Day the Sky Didn't Fall. And that's the way it is on this exciting news day at convention city.

At the Democratic convention last summer the networks kept making a great deal of Ted Kennedy, and of rumors of Ted Kennedy, even when there wasn't much to be made. At the Republican convention the story that Gerald Ford would be the vice-presidential candidate started with a Cronkite interview with Ford; grew; took on a life of its own; reached its zenith when the local news reported as hard fact that the Republican ticket would be Reagan and Ford; and then burst . . . all as part of a media story.

There was an illuminating moment when one of the alleged sources for that story, Governor James Thompson of Illinois, turned to the television interviewer and said: "I heard it all from *you* guys."

WILLIAM LEE MILLER

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Screen

FLEURS DE 'MALLE

ESCAPE INTO SOLIPSISM

AT ONE POINT in *Atlantic City*, Grace (Kate Reid), the bitchy, invalid widow of a gangster, sings an old song to a gullible pregnant girl named Chrissy (Hollis McLaren). "On the board-walk, in At - lantic City," the song says, life will be a "dream." Chrissy and Grace both live in their own, private dream worlds. So do Lou (Burt Lancaster) and Sally (Susan Sarandon). The result is that when two characters in this film have a conversation, they never quite connect. Their relationships are based on vulnerabilities that are mutual, but not shared. Each lives in a kind of solipsism that no one else can penetrate. This makes the relationships between them rather odd and wonderful, and it gives real events an inconsequentiality, an irrelevance almost, that is quite wonderful too.

Near the end of the film, for instance, Lou and Sally are menaced by some hoods, one of whom goes after Sally with a knife. It's not a situation in which Lou has performed well before. The last time, he just stood by, averting his eyes, as the hood beat Sally up. Afterwards Lou could only mumble over and over in self-reproach, "I didn't protect you," meanwhile leaving her to pick herself up from the sidewalk. But this time, to no one's astonishment more than his own, Lou shoots the two hoods. He's so pleased with himself that he practically jumps up and down. Yet even this heroism, we realize, is not going to make any difference between him and Sally. Where his dream is to retire to Florida with her as his mistress, hers is to deal her way to a glamorous life on the Riviera (she's been taking a course for croupiers). After killing the hoods, he asks her to come to Florida so he can "show her off," as if that were a prospect that should appeal to her as much as it does to him. She suggests wistfully that they could go to France instead. It's yet another conversation of non-sequiturs. The next morning she's about to run out on him with money he made dealing cocaine that her husband (Robert Joy) had stolen from the hoods. Though they haven't admitted it to each other, they both know, vaguely, that she's skipping. As she's half out the door, he reminds her that she should soon ditch the car they stole. "You saved my life," she answers irrelevantly, and leaves.

Situations in which characters talk at rather than to each other, as Lou and Sally do, are virtually the basis of modern drama. They are what the most classical modern tragedy and the most existential theater of the absurd have in common. From the plays of O'Neill and Beckett to the movies of Jean-Luc Godard, we constantly meet these characters who are incapable of communing with anyone except themselves—characters whose conversations are not really dialogue at all, but alternating monologues. This vision of modern life is so nearly ubiquitous, it has such authority with us, that it is practically part of the reality we go to the movies to escape. *Atlantic City* is a funny, touching film because it provides such escape. It turns the solipsism into a comedy of errors.

The source of this modern vision of life is, I suppose, the analyst's couch. Since the rules of analysis forbid a response on the analyst's part, they have had a killing effect on drama and comedy alike, both of which require human exchange. Like the self-narration that is composed on the couch, the speeches in modern plays are ideally delivered in a monotone. They are the negation of acting just as the neuroses and psychoses they recite are a negation of feeling. Not the least of *Atlantic City*'s charms, therefore, is that it provides us with a respite from this boredom and alienation. Lou and Sally may not be characters as hard to understand as those in more serious modern works, but they are perhaps harder to enact. They are not the kind of characters whose motives are opaque to everyone, even themselves. The performance that they require has to be as precise and graceful as the toreador's lunge with his sword. It has to land in just the right place—to be broad enough that both we and the other characters in the movie

recognize its preposterousness, but not so broad that it loses its credibility as a self-delusion. Sarandon and Lancaster both rise to what their roles demand. Indeed, Lancaster gives the performance of his career.

Maybe director Louis Malle does, too. Malle has for years been casting about, trying to convince us that sheer personality, the merely human qualities of his characters, should overcome all our moral considerations. Thus has he tried to make us sympathetic to a thief *(Le Voleur)*, a mother who commits incest *(Souffle au Coeur)*, a Nazi collaborator *(Lacombe, Lucien)*, and the thralldom of a child prostitute *(Pretty Baby)*. But until now he has remained an *auteur* in search of the right characters. He has never found a story that could win us over the way he wants. This is what John Guare's script for *Atlantic City* gives him at last. When the small-time crook in it finally murders somebody, and the confused girl for whom he does it runs out on him, Malle gets the happy ending he has always been searching for.

COLIN L. WESTERBECK, JR.

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Books: HARSH LOVE & HUMAN HAPPINESS

THE COMPANY OF WOMEN

Mary Gordon

Random House, $12.95, 291 pp.

Sally Fitzgerald

ST. CYPRIAN was a third-century bishop of Carthage, and an outspoken opponent of Pope Stephen's liberality toward lapsed members of the young church. He was martyred, and personally so revered that he was canonized, and his name has for centuries appeared among those of the early fathers in the Canon of the Mass. Some of his overly rigid views and writings were, however, rejected and officially Indexed as teaching error.

Whether or not by design, a modern Cyprian, who plays a central role in Mary Gordon's fine new book, is reminiscent of his ancient namesake. Father Cyprian—pure, elitist, tyrannical, but unquestionably dedicated to his priesthood—has seen his most cherished theological conceptions rejected, and priestly practices altered, by the post-conciliar church. Unable to accept *aggiornamento*, he can neither live at peace with his Paracletist fellow-monks, nor effectively function as a secular priest, as he attempts to do after leaving his order. The only followers, or friends, left to him are his disprized "goose-girls," five working women of disparate backgrounds, bound together by their devotion to him, and by the sustaining friendship that has grown up among at least four of their number. The only human being Cyprian can really love is the promising daughter of one of these women, the only child among them. Felicitas is well aware of the strangeness of her upbringing in this circle, of which she is the spoiled cynosure and greatest hope. As a young child, she fully returns Father Cyprian's love for her, even as she comes with time to realize what he will do to her life and mind if she does not escape his overweening presence.

Two of the women of the company are spinsters and two are widows. The fifth is manifestly a victim of Cyprian's purism and high-minded arrogation of authority to himself. Married briefly to a dangerous lunatic, Mary Rose is first saved from harm by Cyprian's practical action of leading her husband to Bellevue and doctors who adjudge him to be hopelessly insane. The priest then decides, however, quite on his own, that she is bound to this hapless marriage because her husband "wasn't insane when (she) married him." This without reference to expert medical opinion or higher canonical authority. So Mary Rose obediently spends the better part of her life alone and lonely, attended by the kindly old Jewish owner of the theater where she works, who patiently waits for her to be free so that they can marry.

The others, apart from impossible Muriel, whose only wish is to have Cyprian to herself to wait upon, are no less subservient to his thinking. Occasionally restive and resentful, they are nonetheless faithful to him as mentor and attentive to his personal needs. Neither he nor they seem to realize that he is as dependent upon them as they are upon him. Clare is a well-off career woman in New York, who has inherited from her father a high-fashion leather business which she conducts with taste and acumen. Cyprian's highest praise of her is that she "thinks like a man," and he is of course incapable of understanding that this implies an affront both to herself and her friends. "Womanish" is to him a pejorative term. Elizabeth is a gentle, fearful, but humorous schoolteacher, deserted by her husband after the death of their child. Bookish and bemused, she finds in Charlotte, the rough-tongued mother of Felicitas, a personality who calms her fears and provides the common sense, reciprocal humor, and reassuring warmth she needs to stay them. Charlotte, "whose real genius lay in never longing for what did not seem accessible," takes life as it comes, and deals with it effectively. Cyprian has offended her unforgivably (as, in one way or another, he has offended all these women) by the suggestion that he mourns the death of her husband far more than she. As she realizes, what he really mourns is her marriage to a friend of his, a former seminarian whom he has hoped to make his own disciple. Still, like the rest, she can not only forgive him, she would die for him.

"The salt of the earth," Cyprian calls her. She knows that this means he thinks she is stupid. "He had to do that with people, have that one little sentence about everyone, as if he couldn't remember who was who without it. She was the salt of the earth and Elizabeth was one of God's doves and Clare had a mind like a man's and Mary Rose was a ray of sunlight and Muriel was an extraordinary soul. Something in Cyprian made him do that, as if he had to pin people down so he wouldn't lose track of anybody."

In other words, Cyprian fits everyone into a flat and linear schema of his own. Felicitas matters much more to him than the others, but he sees her with an equally flattening eye: she is to embody the realization of all his hopes. Brilliant, studious, malleable, she is to be formed by himself into an infallible Héloise, or a Catherine of Alexandria, Virgin, Doctor of the Church. He would make of her a denatured, desexed disciple, a mind perfected in his own image. But Felicitas, even at fourteen and still passionately devoted to him despite her growing rage, knows herself better, and his hopes scarcely resemble her own. She is able to appreciate and return the love her mother's other friends surround her with, but she knows that she can find no model for her own life in theirs. At nineteen, now fully defiant, she crashes through all plans to send her off to absorb further "Catholic" education and persuades her mother to let her go to Columbia University instead.

Here, by one of the awful accidents, or designs, of love, she encounters a very

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different sort of man, a fatally handsome, and fatuous, professor of modern political philosophy, Robert Cavendish. He has likewise been able to attract to himself a company of women, but far more slavish women, who live in the seraglio he has set up in the process of freeing them from the old—or any—order of existence. Pitiable, empty, without dignity or real hope of any kind, Iris and Sally live at armistice with each other, occupying his apartment with Sally's small son, Mao, whom the mother is careful to present as the product of a casual—free—encounter, lest she bore the professor with the knowledge of his parenthood. Conversation in this household is usually stoned, entirely predictable, and ineffably boring.

Father Cyprian has once terrified, and infuriated, the adolescent Felicitas, when she speaks of her pleasure in the beauty of the natural world, particularly in the fragrance of grasses, on a drive with him in the country one fine summer day. By way of punishment for this pantheistic failure of 'spirituality,' he stops with her at the run-down farm of an odious family he knows, where he introduces her violently to the smells which for him represent nature: handsful of cow dung, chicken dung, and pig dung, calling this last the most aromatic of all because, as he tells her, "pigs eat garbage, like the mind of modern man." Sickened and rebellious, Felicitas vows to herself never to forgive him, and it is a long time before she does. He has set her up for Robert's apparent health and beauty.

In this new establishment, 'nature' is exalted in theory, but in terms curiously similar to Cyprian's at the farm. Among her new friends, everything is either "good shit" or "bad shit," and "getting (one's) shit together" defines acceptable thinking or performance. And again Felicitas has it thrust in her face *ad nauseam*. Transfixed by this unlikely academic, and with straightforward passion, Felicitas joins his absurd menage as a timid and unloved lover, taken more out of perversity than real attraction or interest on the philosopher's part. There she awaits his summons to bed as it pleases him, when her turn comes. The final indignity he imposes upon her is the suggestion that she further free herself and increase her experience by extending her favors to someone else, anyone else, say nondescript Richard, who lives downstairs with his three dogs, Ho, Che, and Jesus (which, of the nature-lovers, only Felicitas has the wit and will to feed properly and train). Less able to resist Professor Cavendish's guidance than Father Cyprian's, Felicitas obeys, only to find herself pregnant "by one of two men," as she must tell her mother and, eventually, the daughter who is born to her after she finds herself constitutionally unable to go through with an abortion. She is saved from utter despair by the simple, practical kindness of her mother and her mother's friends, including Cyprian, "people who had rigorously worked to banish instinct from their lives," but whose love for her, unjudgmental and resilient, makes it seem entirely natural to them to alter those lives in order to help her construct a new and sheltering one for herself and her child.

Even Cyprian rallies round with an offer to help build a simple house for them near the one he has built for himself on the site of his parents' old farm in upstate New York. Charlotte retires and moves there, too, and Elizabeth moves in to help. Clare pays for everything, cheerfully, and eventually begins the construction of her own house nearby. Poor paranoid Muriel, continuing to fume at the breach of her privilege of sole proximity to Father Cyprian, is no more able to love the child, Linda, than she has been able to love Felicitas or the others, but she does what she can, and she is not excluded.

Only Mary Rose leaves the company, to marry her faithful suitor, a week after she learns that her mad husband has finally died. But before she leaves she has "brought with her the one gift none of the other godmothers had brought to the christening," conventional responses. From Mary Rose and Joe, Felicitas gets the idea that the presence of a baby in the house is a simple pleasure, and for the first time she sees the child as weaker than herself, and as beautiful. Seven years later, Felicitas does not even remember when her life began to change—which is to say, return—and she is no longer desperate. She will marry the village hardware merchant, Leo. She will marry for shelter, she suspects, and to give Linda a father and "an ordinary life." She wants, too, to be more human, and to escape what she feels to be a growing cruelty of judgment in herself that she hopes will be assuaged by sexual love. She wants for her child a father who doesn't father her as if they were both bodiless, as Cyprian had fathered, driving her to extremes of revolt.

The novel, with the exception of the somehow contrived and unbelievable university scenes, is skillfully and richly narrated in its first two parts. The third part, however, is the finest of the book. It is composed of beautifully written and extremely moving meditations in the distinctive voices of each of these women, and of Father Cyprian, who must in effect now choose death or life, after a heart attack. From these we learn something of the composure each has reached

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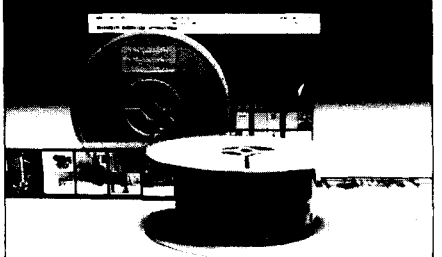

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as an unexpected outcome of the ordeal of Felicitas, and we learn that they are all, except hopeless Muriel, happier than they have ever been in their lives. As Charlotte reflects: "There they are, five old women waiting for an old man to die, living in the country with a young woman and a kid. When you put it that way, it sounds pretty goddamn flat. But you can always make your life sound wrong if you try to describe it in a hundred words or less."

Cyprian, reflecting on himself, and although aware that he, too, is happier than ever before, nevertheless suffers from a sense of failure on all scores, particularly in his priesthood. He is able to see the pride and fastidiousness that have moved him from the outset of his vocation, and to see what a trial he has been to his superiors and fellow-priests. Above all, he thinks about the aging women from whom he has received and accepted so much, even as he despised them all. He realizes how much he has needed them all, and how generously they have responded. He is able to decide that he will pray for the eventual ordination of women. His is a quantum leap in understanding, informed by a new awareness of the inestimable value and sweetness of human love. "I had to learn ordinary happiness," he thinks, "and from ordinary happiness the first real peace of my life, my life which I wanted full of splendor. I wanted to live in the unapproachable light, the light of the pure spirit. Now every morning is miraculous to me. I wake and see in the thin, early light the faces of my friends."

There seems less reason than before for him to fear, as he does, that he has betrayed his vocation in favor of the "terrible ringed accident of human love." Rather, he seems for the first time able to value what he has received, and to return it in kind, instead of forcing upon his friends that which in his vanity he supposed he could give them from his own borrowed splendor. Until he sees the *lumen lumens* he has always longed for, the "slant, imperfect sun" will suffice to reflect it. He is spared the knowledge of the damage he has done to Felicitas by his dualistic schooling. Nor is she aware of the change that has occurred in him. Ironically, now that he might correct and amplify his previous instruction, she can, or will, no longer talk to him about it. But Cyprian's "grand, impossible life," or the idea of it, she knows she will always need at the center of her own. He has made his most important point.

In this novel, Mary Gordon has undertaken something considerably more difficult than the subject of *Final Payments*. Uneven in execution, it is nevertheless, I think, an even more impressive work, larger in scope, more deeply perceptive, richer in mystery, than the first book. A bravo performance. Encore, encore.

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In search of the white blackbird

KIPLING, AUDEN & CO.

Randall Jarrell

Farrar, Straus, Giroux, $17.95, 381 pp.

Mark Taylor

"EVERYONE speaks of the 'negative capability' of the artist," wrote Randall Jarrell some twenty years ago. echoing Keats, "of his ability to lose what self he has in the many selves, the great self of the world. Such a quality is, surely, the first that a critic should have; yet who speaks of the negative capability of the critic? How often are we able to observe it? The commonest response to the self of a work of art is the critic's assertion that he too has a self. What he writes proves it."

However little assent these words would generate today, when it is fashionable to insist upon the aesthethic integrity (if not the aesthetic primacy) of the critical performance, it is unquestionable that Jarrell is describing that quality that made his own one of the most trustworthy and reassuring critical voices of his time, and that allows him still to be read with admiration and delight. Though the collection under review includes essays on music, painting, novels, popular culture, and figures like Ernie Pyle, it was inevitably into discussions of poetry that most of the poet Jarrell's critical energies were channeled. One can think of poets who are terrible reviewers of their contemporaries' work for the very simple reason that their judgments reflect a desire to do in all rivals; and one can think of non-poets who are terrible reviewers of poetry because of their complacent resentment of greater talents: they can't quite forgive poets for being poets. Jarrell, to the contrary, doubtless owed his critical excellence and negative capability to the fact that he was primarily a poet, only secondarily a critic, so that when he functioned as the latter he had need neither to show off the gifts of the former nor to apologize for their lack. He praises that "criticism in which the critic takes it for granted that what he writes about comes first, and what he writes comes second. . . ." When he wanted what he wrote to come first, he wrote poetry.

His criticism, particularly the reviews of his contemporaries that appeared regularly in *The Nation, The New Republic*, and elsewhere, is remarkable for appearing so often to have been correct — rarely has work he didn't care for remained visible, and rarely, thus far, have the subjects of his greatest enthusiasm disappeared from sight — and also for discussing the work at hand so accurately and precisely: noting the exact quality of its diction and images, for example, the extent to which it is traditional or not, of whom and to what degree it is derivative. Jarrell does all this so effortlessly, and with such abundance of grace and wit, that one can overlook how very much extraordinarily good taste and the whole history of poetry inform his judgments. He wrote of two poets that they "are traditional in the sense that an appendix is traditional; they are the remains of something necessary under no longer existing conditions. . . . Into the shining little jelly molds that constitute the poet's repertory of forms, they pour a quaking and formless gelatin — and when the molding is finished, they are satisfied to be deceived by the illusion of form; but the jelly is as soft as ever."

So-and-so's new book, he writes, "is pleasanter and a little quieter than his old, which gave the impression of having been written on a typewriter by a typewriter." "Compared to our bad young poets," Jarrell writes of a young Englishman, Mr. X "is a controlled, civilized, attractive affair; but compared to the good ones . . . he is a nap after dinner." Jarrell's figures of speech are wonderful. Part of Mr. Y's new volume is "a sort of bobby-sòxer's *Mauberley*." Many of Miss Z's phrases "are meant to have an apocalyptic grandeur, but they sound as if Madame Blavatsky . . . had written them for a Society of Latter-day Druids."

Not all of Jarrell's judgments are unfavorable, but most are, most had to be, because most poetry isn't very good. He acknowledges this cheerless certainty: "Whether we live in the Athens of Pericles or the England of Elizabeth I, there is one law we can be sure of: there are only a few good poets alive." He puts the critical act into perspective: "Disliking what is bad is only the other face of liking what is good; but what a dark, dank, grudging, graceless face, one endeared neither to gods nor men! And the good, in poetry, is always a white blackbird, an abnormal and unlikely excellence; all that deserves our respect in ordinary life — the consistent, adequate, responsible norm of behavior — gains only our indifference, here. It is unpleasant, discouraging, unnatural to have to go on saying, about each shining new blackbird: *But it's black*; I do it, but I hate doing it. . . ." These reflections are followed by a commentary on eleven new books of poetry; the discerning reader will have guessed the general tone of that.

How wondrous, then, how positively renewing, to see in Robert Lowell's first book, *Land of Unlikeness*, the potential for greatness that most reviewers sensed only with his second book, *Lord Weary's Castle*, if then: "At his best Mr. Lowell is a serious, objective, and extraordinary accomplished poet. He is a promising poet in this specific sense: some of the best poems of the next years ought to be written by him." And how gratifying to one's faith, how rewarding of one's patience, after noting all the black blackbirds, to be able to write (in 1955) of Robert Graves's *Collected Poems* and Elizabeth Bishop's *Poems*, "I can say about them, as an advertisement would: 'If you want to read some of the poems your great-great-grandchildren will be reading, these are the books for you to buy.' " (Jarrell could change his mind. Fifteen years earlier he had written that Graves, though "pleasant," "is not a good poet . . . even his best poems just miss.")

There is no mystery about the perpetual preponderance of bad poetry, but one thing Jarrell has to say on the difficulties of the poet's craft is worth quoting. (Everything he has to say on the subject is worth quoting, but I shall content myself

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with one remark.) "The general lack of freedom of the poet is grotesquely intensified in the specific lack of freedom of the poem — in which each part is determined not only by the demands of the incomplete tentative mass of the already existing parts, but by the overriding demands of the obscurely divined, problematic, and unique whole." Every poet, indeed every writer, knows what it is thus to be trapped between what he has written and what he has not yet written. I've never seen it put better.

Jarrell died in 1965. *Kipling, Auden & Co.* is the fourth and final collection of his essays and reviews, the second to be published posthumously. There are sixty or seventy pieces here, all eminently deserving of one's attention, even where the issue is long settled, the poet or poem long forgotten. It is an unhappy thought that there will be no more.

A locus for the divine

THE CULT OF SAINTS
ITS RISE AND FUNCTION IN LATIN CHRISTIANITY

Peter Brown

Univ. of Chicago, $15, 188 pp.

THE MEANING OF SAINTS

Lawrence Cunningham

Harper and Row, $9.95, 186 pp.

George H. Tavard

WHILE sainthood belongs inseparably to the Christian theology of grace, saints seem to belong rather to folklore and, at least in Catholicism and Orthodoxy, to liturgy and prayer. Thus, two levels are immediately open to research into what makes the saint and what saints have been like, a technical-scientific one and a descriptive-popular one. The two books now reviewed reflect quite different points of view, which in part correspond to these two levels of inquiry. Peter Brown, previously known for a major study of the life of St. Augustine, belongs in the scientific category. He has written an important study of the historical origin of the cult of saints, one that cannot be neglected in any investigation of the Christian world and of Christian thought in a period that goes from the time of persecution (second-third centuries) to the "late antique" period of the sixth-seventh centuries. Lawrence Cunningham, who has previously written about St. Francis and is the author of a translation of St. Bonaventure's *Mind's Journey to God*, tries to be both scientific and popular, with the foreseeable result that his book will satisfy nobody.

The need to locate the holy is experienced in all religions. That Christianity should provide new ways of locating it would seem to be implied in the very notion of an incarnation. That the holy would be located by Christians, not only in Word and Sacraments, but also around the tombs of saints, relics, bones, places where saints have had a special experience (like St. Francis at Mount Alverno) or where saints are said to have been seen (like Lourdes or Fatima in our time), does not necessarily follow from belief in the Incarnation. The very existence of Protestantism shows that sainthood conceived as a locus of the divine for all generations—and not only for the saint himself—is not a necessary option. That the option was made in the time of the Fathers of the church is, however, a historical fact of major importance. Brown shows that this option tallied with the general sense of the religious in humankind, and especially with the reaction of both Jews and Gentiles to the death of remarkable religious personalities. Yet the way of popular religion was endorsed by no less a person than St. Augustine, who devoted to its defense and promotion the last book of his famous *City of God*. Indeed, the support of the theologians was necessary to negotiate the delicate passage from the sainthood of the martyrs, who had shed their blood for

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their faith, to the sainthood of more or less obviously holy persons (some, of little apparent holiness) who had died of natural causes.

The original contribution of Brown lies in his pointing out of the connections between the relationships of a *client* to his *patron* in the Roman world, and that of devotees to their chosen saint. As described by various authors from the fourth century on, the saint is a companion, though invisible, a teacher, a leader, a spiritual adviser and guide no less than an example and model. While the saints function as icons or images of Christ and lead to Christ, they also manifest their presence *(praesentia)* by the spiritual power *(potentia)* which from time to time emerges from their invocation. These two Latin words, the headings of Brown's last two chapters, sum up neatly the scope of the spiritual relationships which tie the saint to the Christians still struggling in the present world.

The Meaning of Saints undoubtedly suffers from being read close to *The Cult of the Saints*. It is not only that Cunningham was unacquainted with Peter Brown's book when he wrote his historical first chapter: here, the spiritual relationship between saints and the living faithful is reduced to the saint's role as miracle-worker and model. Cunningham also tries to sum up the history of canonizations and their process in the Roman Catholic church; but the excesses of bureaucratization in the treatment of the "causes of the saints" by the relevant section of the Congregation of Rites (reshaped by Paul VI as the Congregation for the Causes of the Saints) hardly justify the conclusion that canonizations should be left to the people and should no longer be the object of a canonical process. Cunningham supports his case with a new definition of sainthood. A saint is a person with a vision, which is not only central to that person's life but becomes contagious and reaches out to many others. Such a vision, if I understand correctly, need not have anything to do with God. Agnostic saints and atheistic saints are quite possible.

I find it most peculiar that, in order to illustrate his meaning, Cunningham has recourse, not only to living personages, such as Mother Teresa, or to recent ones, such as Gandhi, Teilhard de Chardin, John XXIII, but also to the purely fictional characters invented by novelists or poets. Silone *(Bread and Wine)*, Graham Greene *(The Power and the Glory)*, T.S. Eliot *(Four Quartets)* describe modern saints and modern sainthood: it is hidden and often paradoxical; it lies, not in the saints' capacity to work miracles, but in the ability to live through the entanglements and oppressions of modern life; it strives in the concentration camp, be this the Gulag or Harlem, and reacts to conditions of oppression, whether totalitarian, military, or economic. But Cunningham is so carried away by his theme that the fiction character seems as real to him as the authentic living person. And the vision of sainthood gets so blurred that the reader is not quite sure if the saint is the drunken priest of *The Power and the Glory* or is, in fact, Graham Greene himself.

There are additional problems with Cunningham's treatment of the saints. That Tolstoy may be a modern saint could be acceptable, if one did not know what a dictatorial tyrant he was for his unfortunate wife! There are also a number of historical mistakes: the legend of Veronica is not medieval, but is in fact much older (p. 93); epiphanic does not mean hidden (p. 98), but just the opposite: manifested; Pascal never wrote (as on p. 97), that "Jesus will be on the cross until the end of the world"; the Alyosha of Dostoevski's *The Brothers Karamazov* is constantly written, Aloysha. And there is a considerable amount of wishful thinking in believing that "Eurocommunists now regard the Soviet Union as an 'antimodel'" (p. 90). Cunningham has tried to do too much; he has done it too fast and superficially.

Both of the volumes, however, highlight an important point. No religion, including Christianity, can last very long without being concerned about its own efficiency and availability as a spiritual movement. The experience of holiness in oneself, which is never total and leaves one always with the urge to rely more on divine grace than on oneself, does go side by side with the perception of holiness in

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REVIEWERS

SALLY FITZGERALD *selected and edited* Letters of Flannery O'Connor, The Habit of Being *(Farrar, Straus)*.

MARK TAYLOR *is chairman of the English department at Manhattan College. He is the author of* The Soul in Paraphrase: George Herbert's Poetics *and* Shakespeare's Darker Purpose.

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others. The difference between the saint and most of us is that the saint's holiness is better perceived—presumably because more perceivable—than ours. But, even though I have nothing specific against Evita Peron, I would not trust the confused people of the contemporary world to canonize saints. It takes a saint to recognize a saint. A careful bureaucracy is no substitute for a saint; but it has not been, on the whole, a bad agent of detection for holiness.

An inventive link in the chain of tales

ITALIAN FOLKTALES

Italo Calvino
Translated by George Martin
Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, $25, 800 pp.

Kristen Murtaugh

DOES an Italian equivalent of *Grimms*'s Fairy Tales exist? Italo Calvino began his research into Italian folktales with that question in mind. When it became clear that there was no "readable master collection of Italian folktales which would be popular in every sense of the word," Calvino himself assumed the work of assembling one. It was a Herculean undertaking. Calvino collated, categorized, and compared "mountains of narratives." His work had two objectives, he tells us, the presentation of every type of folktale documented in Italian dialects and the representation of all regions of Italy. The "scientific" work, the direct transcription of folktales "from the mouths of the people," had already been done by several nineteenth century Italian folklorists. Calvino made his way through their anthologies, looking for the most unusual, beautiful, and original texts. These texts he then edited, enriched with variants, and translated into standard Italian from the various dialects in which they had been recorded. The end result is a collection of two hundred tales arranged in a geographical sequence. The tales are classified as to the place of the narration of the particular version presented (not the place of origin, Calvino carefully notes, for it makes little sense to say "from where" a folktale ultimately comes), and the collection moves in a roughly north to south direction. In 1956 Italians were treated to the publication of this most complete collection yet of their folktales *(Fiabe italiane)*. The stories and the editor seemed made for one another, for Italo Calvino was himself a celebrated fablemaker. Now with the publication of *Italian Folktales* English language readers can enter the delightful world Calvino charted for his countrymen.

In a lengthy introduction Calvino outlines the criteria and method of his work, discusses different theories of interpretation, and describes the basic characteristics of the Italian folktale. He also appends notes to each tale to explain the source of the particular version presented. Both the introduction and the notes indicate a very interesting aspect of this collection, the presence in many of the tales not simply of Calvino the compiler and editor, but of Calvino the storyteller and fablemaker himself. Calvino says that he has thought of himself as a link in the unending chain by which folktales are handed down. Benedetto Croce remarked that the real "authors" of popular poetry were its anonymous but far from passive transmitters. Similarly, Calvino says, he has been guided by a Tuscan proverb, "La novella nun e bella, se sopra nun ci rappella" ("The tale is not beautiful if nothing is added to it"). So add Calvino does, and modify, and restructure many of the tales.

The most significant and pervasive type of change in Calvino's adaptation of the tales reflects what critics have called his "spirit of geometry," the predilection for symmetry characteristic of his own fiction. The very first tale of the collection, "Dauntless Little John," alerts us to a desire for narrative balance. A giant makes his appearance down a fireplace limb by limb. Calvino adds what he calls a "personal touch" to the fable by having him also disappear limb by limb. Calvino also changes the names of characters, adds or subtracts narrative details, draws out latent thematic correspondences, and creates new patterns of imagery in many of the tales. He is particularly struck by the many metamorphoses of woman and fruit and woman and tree in Italian folktales, and he points to the narrative power of the metaphorical link in which the image of the fruit evokes that of the woman. Often, however, it seems that the "precise rhythm" and "joyous logic" which he discerns in such stories of transformations are really the result of Calvino's own inventiveness. One of the most striking examples of his adaptation of a story

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in the direction of a more pronounced metaphorical symmetry is "The Little Girl Sold with the Pears."

In the traditional tale, a little girl named Margheritina is placed in the bottom of a basket of pears to make it look full, and delivered to the king's kitchen. Raised there she draws the favor of the king's son and the jealousy of the maid servants. Banished through their trickery, she returns with a witch's treasure, protected by magical props provided by the prince, whom she marries. Where the original tale seemed to put its emphasis on the power and constancy of love, Calvino's adaptation shifts the attention to the pear motif. He changes the child's name to Perina ("Little Pear") and he invents an episode in which the young girl receives the means for obtaining the treasure from a little old woman under a pear tree. Thus, when Calvino speaks of the hybrid nature of his edition, we must remember the more literary qualities the popular tales assume as they are recast by a contemporary *letterato*, an accomplished and self-conscious practitioner himself of the art of the fable.

Calvino makes some very interesting and suggestive remarks in his introduction about the nature of love, the imagery of cruelty, and the relation of the world of the king to that of the peasant in the Italian folktale. He doesn't, however, discuss one of the most interesting types of folktales represented in this collection, the stories about various saints or about Christ and the Apostles. Calvino includes two series of brief tales about Christ and St. Peter, one from Friuli and one from Sicily. There is something very Italian about these wonderful sketches in which Christ is shown playing tricks on his Apostles and "splitting his sides laughing" when St. Peter's attempts at miracle-making backfire. The Mediterranean world has traditionally had a more relaxed relationship not only to its rulers and its legendary heroes, but also to its saints and to God himself. In the hands of these story-tellers, who have picked up on hints in the gospel narrative, St. Peter undergoes the same demystification into a rather buffoonish character that the austere French heroes of the *Chanson de Roland* underwent when appropriated by the itinerant Italian singers of chivalric romance. St. Peter comes across as a glutton, a braggart, a well-meaning but blundering fool. What promises to be a miracle narration, "Stones to Bread," turns out to be a lesson in the form of a joke played by Christ on St. Peter. When Christ asks each of the disciples to pick up and carry a stone, Peter chooses the tiniest pebble he can find. Later Christ turns the stones into bread and Peter's subsequent hunger repays his laziness.

Italian Folktales is a delightful book. George Martin's translation of the tales, itself a Herculean undertaking, captures quite competently the vivid, colloquial, and quick-paced spirit of Calvino's Italian rendition. The author's informative introduction, notes, and bibliography are valuable complements, and the attractive miniature woodcuts are charming. This handsome volume, almost a log of Calvino's "journey" through Italy's fairyland, has much to offer both the serious scholar and the casual reader of the folktale.

Correspondence

(Continued from page 384)

all the states on the Northern tier without large cities had low murder rates. Those states had little mixing of races. The states on the Southern tier had high murder rates. Much as we hate to admit it, the fact is that the mixing of races engenders tensions that contribute to crime, including murder, probably more than any other single factor. (A long list of Negroes have been killed in Atlanta. I have not heard that many if any have been shot.)

Pro-gun control people argue that because the crime rate is high we should ban handguns. That is putting the cart before the horse. It is *because* the crime rate is high that handguns should not be banned. If the state cannot prevent violent crime, cannot protect the citizens, then the citizens must be afforded the means to protect themselves. In Miami we have a microcosm of the national problem. The influx of Cubans (mixing of races) has shot the crime rate up as well as the rate of buying handguns. The crime rate did not go up because of the surge in handgun ownership; handgun ownership surged *because* the crime rate went up. Comparing other countries is invalid.

E. G. MARQUIS

Cavalier liberals

Southfield, Mich.

To the Editors: Abigail McCarthy asks, "Why is the administration so set on cutting programs for the poor?" [Ap. 10]. The objective of the cuts is not to cut social programs as it is to balance the budget. Years and years of horrendous federal deficits have ravaged this country. Our industries cannot be starved, abused and hamstrung and still produce more and more wealth for bureaucrats to redistribute. A liberal Congress voted for social programs which endeared them to many large, well organized voting blocs, but then it did not have the courage to vote the taxes to go with them.

Where were the liberal voices when these social programs were delivering only a few cents on the dollar to the poor? I never heard any concern about making these programs more efficient, getting more of those dollars to those who really need it. The attitude was rather cavalier. The fat cats and those multi-national companies could pay it. Then those tax rates which Congress didn't have the courage to index to inflation, started putting more and more working people into the "fat cat" brackets. Finally the pendulum swung the other way as the electorate voted for a change.

The liberals who today cry about the budget cuts need to be reminded: The force which powers the pendulum to the right today is fueled by the energy which was stored in it when liberals pushed it so far to the left without regard for the consequences.

EDWARD COLLINS

Stockman's knitting

Albany, N.Y.

To the Editors: Answering Abigail McCarthy [Apr. 10]: *Where my heart lies, let my brain lie also.*

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It warms the cockles of my heart (and Meg Greenfield's in *Newsweek* for Feb. 23 also) to see political and business figures who have made a career of lambasting Uncle Sugar and his profligate ways having it slowly borne in upon them that their own subsidies have turned up in David Stockman's knitting. What appears to be radical in the Reagan-Stockman approach, what we are all still unwilling to credit, is the possibility that some relatively consistent and objective standards might be made the test of whether or not a program should be supported.

Along with Meg (now Peg of my heart) the political irreverence of the Reagan approach to the budget has already had its uses (and abuses). It has forced people to forget the palaver, the verbal tricks they have been playing for decades, and get down to explaining and defending their own government expenditures (if they can) in serious ways.

It is not just those well-subsidized people on the right who have been inveighing against deficit spending over the years (fifty plus), confident in the knowledge that nothing would be done about their own boodle, who are having to revise their arguments. It is also that colony of folks who have come to inhabit the lazy left, people who long ago stopped thinking what they were supporting just as long as it could go by some irreproachable general name.

Can government at this late date (asks Meg) really distinguish between the legitimate and essential programs, on the one hand, and, on the other, these unessential borderline scams? The fatalism that marks the other part of Washington's response to the Reagan-Stockman assault is based on the assumption that it can't and/or doesn't want to. The domestic-budget argument theoretically engages conservative versus liberals. In truth, the web of subsidies and support systems that has grown up over the years mixes up these people together and creates a common stake in perpetuating programs that already exist. All this has gotten more, not less, rigid, and ingrained with the passage of time.

Listen to your legislators talk about the political action committees that finance their campaigns and pressure their activities ever after. Hear people in both the legislative and executive branches marvel, in total gloom, at the degree to which government action has become a series of recurrent struggles to paste together a special-interest coalition, good for some one-shot endeavor and needing to be created in some new form for the next maneuver. We sigh. We write about how little it is possible to do to alter them. There are the "constraints." There are the "complexities." There is the terrible fact that — deep down — business, labor, academia, the professions, and even the leadership of some organized supplicants rather like the thing the way it is: THEY KNOW HOW TO WORK IT.

What is so radical (refreshing) in the administration's approach is that they are committed to crashing through that layer of hypocrisy and that structure of legal payoffs that characterize our traditional budget building. I hope they can succeed.

SISTER CLAUDE OF JESUS, SNJM

Militarism & mistrust

Heidelberg, West Germany

To the Editors: Please excuse my English.

Your recent editorial remarks about weaponry were most exciting. As a German, one has to be reserved and guarded criticizing U.S. policy. We must never forget that we have been delivered by the Americans, though only externally, from Nazism.

Nonetheless, please permit me to mention the following:

1. The new administration was elected by scarcely a third of the people entitled to vote.

2. The administration strives after military preponderance. But if the balance of the terror is very terrible, the striving after the preponderance of one side, because it drives up the armament spiral, threatens to become catastrophic.

3. And what about military support by the U.S. for the fascistic military regimes in Latin America and elsewhere, support for the rich against the poor!

4. Our Federal German Republic, especially the CDU/CSU, pays tribute to, even suffers from, the anti-Communist complex, if not hysteria or psychosis, incapable of distinguishing between not being Communist and being anti-Communist. Is this not also the defect of the new Reagan administration? The anti-Communist complex poisons the political atmosphere, demonizes the adversary, and carries mistrust to extremes, so that the victim is incapable of taking the initiative for trust. This is my sorrow.

(REV.) ALFONS BEIL

Getting his Irish up

Copenhagen, Denmark

To the Editors: Concerning "An 'Irish' Solution" by Desmond Fisher [Jan. 16], I wish to suggest to you that anyone — in this case Desmond Fisher — using the adjective "Irish" to mean "bungled," "inappropriate," "straining credulity" (his definition), is unworthy of reporting from Ireland on a regular or indeed on any other basis.

ROBERT F. MADDEN

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Public Affairs: Sean Cronin, "Portraits from El Salvador" . . . Fred Siegel, "Notes on the New Right" . . . The Editors, "President Reagan's Dangerous Mixture" . . . Roger M. Williams, "The Other Cape Town" . . . J. Patrick Dobel, "A Last Lament for James Earl Carter" . . . Nancy Amidei, "The Attack on Food Stamps" . . . Jim Chapin, "What the Democrats Should Do."

Religion: David J. O'Brien, "The Pilgrimage of Dorothy Day" . . . Jean Bethke Elshtain, "A Feminist Journey" . . . Samuel Hux, "An Outsider's View of Catholic Social Thought" . . . The Editors, "A Scandal to Left and Right" . . . George H. Dunne, "An Account of Faith" . . . Jo McGowan, "Marriage vs. Living Together" . . . Special Issue on Post-Vatican II Theology.

Literature and the Arts: Jorge Luis Borges, "Walt Whitman, Poet of Democracy" . . . Charles Brady, "From Fantasy to Reality" . . . Graham Greene, "How I Became a 'Catholic Writer' " . . . Nicolaus Mills, "Edward Hopper's Heavenly City" . . . Roger Copeland, An Interview with Susan Sontag . . . Maureen Mullarkey, "The Dinner Party" . . . Saul Maloff, "Hemingway Alive."

Coming in Future Issues: John Stevens on a Buddhist perspective on Catholic monasticism; Jean Bethke Elshtain on Pope John Paul II: Feminist; James Bernauer, S.J. on Eichmann in Jerusalem; John C. Cort on a Family Meeting; Alain Woodrow on the new Archbishop of Paris.

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